

NOVEMBER, 1960

TWO SHILLINGS

BALLET

TODAY



ZIZI JEANMAIRE

Ballet

TODAY

A MONTHLY REVIEW DEVOTED TO DANCE

ESTABLISHED 1946

THE MAGAZINE WITH THE WIDEST NEWS AND PHOTO COVERAGE OF BALLET
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD



Manuela Varella Cid and Carlos Trincheiras
in *Swan Lake*.

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OUR NEXT ISSUE WILL BE PUBLISHED ON 24th NOVEMBER.

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VIOLETTE VERDY

the story of her career

AS TOLD TO SONIA ROBERTS



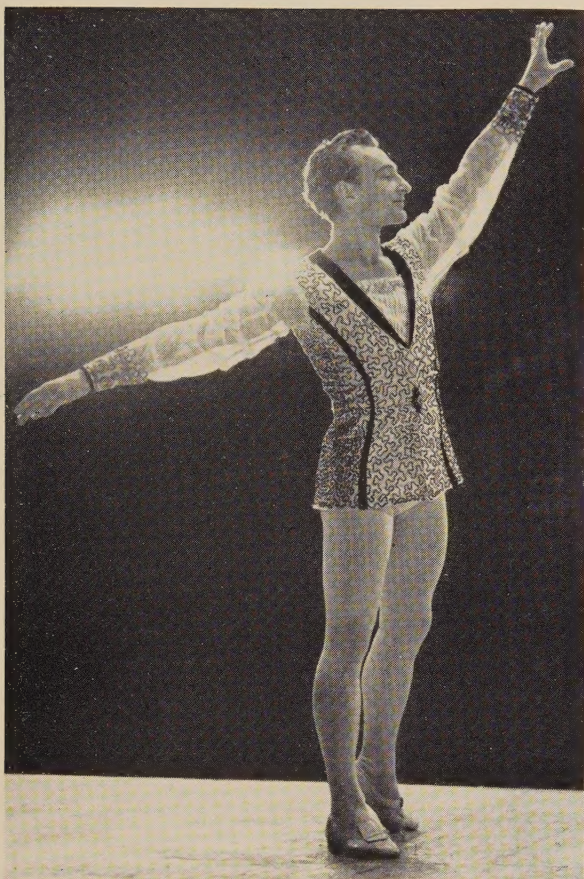
Violette Verdy in *Western Symphony*.

Photo: Martha Swope.

BORIS KHOKHLOV

of the Bolshoi Ballet

EXCLUSIVE BALLET TODAY INTERVIEW BY JANET SINCLAIR



Boris Khokhlov in *Swan Lake*. Photo: Houston Rogers.

GABRIELLA LAKATOS

and

FERENC HAVAS

AN ARTICLE ON THE FIRST VISIT TO LONDON OF THE FAMOUS HUNGARIAN STARS, BY DENNIS GRAY STOLL FORMER CONDUCTOR OF THE BALLETS RUSSES DE MONTE CARLO.



dancers in town

WITH the close of Festival Ballet's summer season and the Royal Ballet touring the English provinces and America, it looked as if we in London were in for a pretty arid period. Instead, November comes in with a flourish, with the incomparable Zizi Jeanmaire opening at the Royalty on November 2nd, for a three-and-a-half weeks' season, followed by Antonio and his Spanish Ballet at the same theatre on November 30th.

AN EVENING WITH ZIZI JEANMAIRE, which ran in Paris last year under the title of *Tour de Chant*, is directed and choreographed by Roland Petit. Several new items are to be added, including the world première of a ballet based on the Somerset Maugham story "Rain", adapted for the first time into a modern ballet. Jeanmaire will play the part of Sadie Thompson (previously performed by Gloria Swanson, Joan Crawford and Rita Hayworth). Music will be by Marius Constant. Peter Daubeny is presenting the season, as he did last time Jeanmaire danced in London, in 1956, when she was seen in *Carmen*.

ANTONIO AND HIS SPANISH BALLETS will have a completely new programme to include *Variations on a Spanish Rhapsody* by Albeniz and the première



of a ballet *Jugando Al Toro* (Bullfight Ballet) with music by Cristobal Halffter, decor and costumes by Bernard Daydé. Production, choreography, direction and lighting are by Antonio.



AND don't forget the next Sunday Ballet Club performance, which, at the time of going to press, is scheduled to take place on the 13th November at the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue. With Michael Charnley, Peter Darrell, Leo Kharibian (of *West Side Story*) and Dennis Carey presenting new ballets and the last two choreographers using new scores, it should be a very interesting evening.

Editor's Log

READERS may wonder why we made no mention in our last issue of John Gilpin's departure for a tour of South Africa and his reported resignation from Festival Ballet. For the past two years rumour has had it that Gilpin had resigned, or was about to resign; usually about the time his contract came up for renewal. Naturally those immediately concerned were not prepared to make a definite statement while transactions were taking place, and even now it would not be wise to jump to conclusions. Gilpin returns to Festival Ballet for the Christmas *Nutcracker* season, after that it is anybody's guess.

André Prokovsky has left Festival Ballet to join De Cuevas, but the press report that Marilyn Burr has also left the company is without foundation. She did in fact leave London at the end of the season to take part in Bermuda's second annual ballet week which opened on 28th September. (See photograph in *Backstage*.)

Anita Landa (married to Michael Hogan, also a principal dancer with Festival Ballet) had to be relieved of her roles at the end of the season as she is expecting her first child.

Olga Ferri, prima ballerina of the Colon Opera House, Buenos Aires, and guest artist with Festival Ballet during the summer season in London, goes on tour with them when they open in the provinces in November.

Festival Ballet's Christmas season will open at the Royal Festival Hall, London, on Boxing Day and continue until January 14th.

The Royal Ballet

Alicia Markova will be guest prima ballerina with the Royal Ballet during November when the Company visit Oxford, Bristol and Bournemouth.

The Company's season at Covent Garden opens on the 14th December; the repertoire will include *Cinderella* and the London première of a new ballet by Kenneth Macmillan with music by Matyas Seiber, scenery and costumes by Nicholas Georgiadis

All-Star Gala

What is known affectionately through the ballet world as "Margot's Gala," the annual Gala Matinée organised by Dame Margot Fonteyn in aid of the Royal Academy of Dancing, will be held for the third year on Thursday, December 8th, at 3 p.m., at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Her Majesty The Queen Mother and H.R.H. The Princess Margaret have consented to be present.

It must be very difficult to organise such an event under any circumstances, for dancers move around the world almost as fast as they do on the stage. But to catch up with them, and make arrangements whilst engaged on a strenuous American tour herself, would seem a colossal and nightmarish task, even for Dame Margot. However, take a look at the cast lined up for this year, and you will see what I mean. Both Tallchiefs are to appear—Maria, the great American dramatic ballerina, and Marjorie, with her husband George Skibine, both from the Paris Opera. With Vladimir Skouratoff,

Skibine and his wife will dance in his ballet *Idylle*. Erik Bruhn, principal dancer of the Royal Danish Ballet, is to dance one of his pas-de-deux with Maria Tallchief. Markova has a new pas seul for the occasion. For John Gilpin an excerpt dropped from the present production of *Czernyana* is to be restored, and he will dance this with Lucette Aldous of Ballet Rambert. Gilpin will also dance with Belinda Wright in a new pas-de-deux to be choreographed by Jack Carter. As in previous years, Fonteyn will herself appear in the programme, partnered by Michael Somes. This year, accompanied by the Royal Ballet Company at present on tour in England, they will dance the ballroom scene from Frederick Ashton's ballet *Apparitions*. Tickets from 5s. 6d. to £10 10s. are obtainable from Webster & Girling, 211 Baker Street, London, N.W.1.

Free Gift to Members

The Folio Society are offering a free volume of *Degas Ballet Dancers* to new and renewing members. The volume contains 70 of Degas' most famous works (14 in colour) and is in a large quarto size printed on heavy white art paper. To become a member you have to agree to purchase a minimum of four of the Society's publications listed in their prospectus available on request. The Folio Society also offer club facilities for members at 6, Stratford Place, London. The Club is open from Monday to Friday between 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. You can ask your friends to meet you at their wine bar; there is a listening bar where you can play classical records, or you can relax in comfort, read, or write letters. Art exhibitions are held throughout the year. A subscription to the club, membership of which is open to members of the Folio Society and the Record Society only, costs only 5s. per annum.

Do-it-yourself Critics

Before he left for the States in October I asked Ted Kneeland, producer of the musical *The Princess*, how his show had made out after the "free seats for all" period, which we reported last month. "Well," he said, "all along I was convinced that there were many thousands of people who would enjoy such a show and in that I have been proved right, for we were, after all, able to complete the original six weeks' season we had planned, and of the 6,000 people who filled in the questionnaire issued with the programme only 3 per cent. were unfavourable." (Slipping in one night to see the show I was amazed to see the audience sitting on the stairs, propping themselves against the walls, writing their criticisms and then *queueing* to hand them in.—EDITOR.)

"During the run of the show," Mr. Kneeland continued, "with the permission of Equity, a full-length 16 mm. film was shot in colour: we intended it at that stage for private use, but two offers have since been made to use this as a spectacular on American TV."

Offers have also been received to stage the show in Paris and Berlin, but before any

further plans are settled Mr. Kneeland is to effect changes in the Introduction which will make the show more suitable as a Christmas or holiday presentation. There is also a possibility of the production going on tour in America, and with this in mind the producer has spoken to quite a few members of the original cast, hoping they will be available when the show resumes its tour, possibly six to eight weeks ahead.

Mr. Kneeland had no hard feelings towards the English critics who drubbed his show. "The *nicest* thing," he said, "was that twelve-year-old Claudia Cravey really emerged as a star during this London run, and on her return to America will hold a press reception prior to appearing on several major TV networks." The unkindest thing? "The score of *The Princess* was criticised as 'Hollywoodian' and 'reminiscent.' If the critics were comparing our score with ballet scores, then this is true, but we never pretended it was a straightforward ballet: we called it a musical, and our score was no more 'reminiscent' than that of a dozen other musicals I can think of."

To Save Your Time

If you are looking for gifts suitable for ballet lovers, Sonia Roberts will save you many weary hours of tramping round the stores with her comprehensive article on "Christmas Gifts for Balletomanes." To be published next month.

News from here and there

Hungary

Walt Disney Productions are to make a 50-minute film of Hungary's State Folk Dance Ensemble.

When completed it will be used by Disney as part of a full-length film on European folklore.

Work on the film began on September 14. After rehearsals, shooting takes 25 days. The ensemble will perform nine Hungarian dances, and there will be special items by the ensemble's musicians and singers.

Mexico

The National Institute of Fine Arts, under the general director, Señor Celestino Gorostiza, presented this season in Mexico the official Ballet Mexicano, under the artistic direction of Ana Mérida.

Ana Sokolow, who is well known in Mexico, will create, amongst her ballets for the season, *Opus 1960*, a work composed by Teo Macero.

Director Ana Mérida will also create *Complejo de Electra*, a ballet based on music composed especially by Buillermo Noriega and designed by José Solé.

The 20 performances by the Ballet Mexicano will be held in the beautiful Bellas Artes in Mexico City from September 27 to October 30.

LONDON REVIEWS

by FERNAU HALL



SUSANA AND JOSÉ

WHEN Susana and José appeared at Sadlers Wells in May 1959, I wrote of them that they have few of the qualities one expects in either Spanish dancers or theatricals—Susana being hard-working but highly respectable, and José rather ponderous. But, I added, "What these two dancers do have is ideas—sometimes very good ones. . . . With their new ideas Susana and José can make a real contribution to the development of Spanish dancing in the theatre, but only on condition that they learn to stage their ideas properly."

When they opened their season at the Westminster Theatre on 5th September, I was delighted to find that they have done just what I hoped. Their new ballet *The Ballad of Carmen and Don José* is a great success, representing in fact a major step forward in Spanish choreography. In this ballet elements from many periods have been combined with such good taste and imagination that a unity of effect is created which is extremely rare in this field. The story is of course that of the novel by Prosper Mérimée, written in the 19th century. This has been given the form of an old traditional ballad, and sung in the traditional way with all the appropriate Moorish ornaments—the words being printed in ancient style (as on ballad-sheets) and hung over the stage in the manner of Brecht—the appropriate sheet being spotlighted as the words are sung. As in Brecht's plays the actual words of the ballad are sung before the action they describe is performed. Apart from the ballad-sheets, there is little decor until the final scene, when the back of the stage is filled with a fine abstract setting in dark tones which is symbolic in a Picassian manner rather than representative: this makes a fine climax, and shows excellent imagination and flair in the designer, Max Röhrlisberger. The music by Antonio Robledo (largely an arrangement of traditional patterns of melody and rhythm) is skilfully fitted to the structure of the ballet: the sung interludes are completely in the traditional manner, with guitar accompaniment (plus an occasional drum-beat), while the danced episodes are accompanied by piano, xylophone, side-drum and gong. This use of percussion is particularly interesting, for it takes us back to the Indian origins of Flamenco: in Indian music, drums are of course of vital importance.

But all the intelligence and imagination applied to the structure of the ballet and to its music and staging would be wasted if the choreography and dancing were not able to meet the challenge presented by such a new type of work. To a very considerable extent they do just this, showing the two dancers in a far more favourable light than ever before. With one exception the whole of the choreography is in pure Flamenco style, and the mime too follows Flamenco traditions. What is remarkable is the way in which traditional Flamenco patterns have been adapted to dramatic purposes, without watering them down or corrupting them with movements from other styles: this sounds simple enough (for Flamenco as performed in the traditional manner by gypsies can express a wide variety of emotions), but in fact those attempting to arrange Flamenco ballets in the past have had only very limited success.

The only non-Flamenco element is to be found in Scenes 2 and 3, in which Don José wears Basque costume and dances in a pure Basque style: according to the ballad, he is a soldier from Vasconia, the Basque country. But he is overwhelmed by his love for Carmen, forsakes his duty, and "goes native": from then on he wears Andalusian dress and dances in Flamenco style. Choreographically this is rather naïve, but it suits perfectly the ballad atmosphere of the ballet. And the bold, simple structure of the ballad makes perfectly satisfying the limitation to two dancers: extreme economy is just as characteristic of Spanish ballads as of those of the Anglo-Scottish Border.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about *The Ballad of Carmen and Don José* is the dramatic ability it reveals in the two dancers. Susana does not achieve quite the wanton and voluptuous quality demanded in Carmen, but she transcends her own limitations quite remarkably, and José is convincingly stiff and tortured in the part of Don José.

In the other items Susana and José are much as before. The Catalan dances of *Catalanesca* have the advantage of taking us to a region of Spain usually neglected by Spanish dancers, but they are made rather too sober by Susana and José: Catalan dances are of course very different from those of other parts of Spain, but they too must be given some vitality. On the opening night the best item (apart from *The Ballad of Carmen and Don José*) was a Sevillanas performed as an encore at the end of the programme: this was danced with such gusto one would have liked to see five or even seven *coplas* instead of the two to which Susana and José limited themselves.

ANIARA

ON 7th September the Royal Opera of Stockholm performed the "space opera" *Aniara* at Covent Garden, where the technical facilities made it possible for the Swedish technicians to stage it even more poetically than in Edinburgh. On second viewing and hearing, it was above all the decor and lighting which caught the imagination: the designer (Sven Erixson) and the producer (Gövan Gentele) have intelligently resisted all temptation to give a realistic picture of the inside of a space ship at some remote future date, relying on an extreme simplicity (with plain black circles enclosing the space of the stage and a stippled blue cyclorama suggesting interstellar space) to keep one's attention concentrated on the action. Unfortunately the latter was not brought out clearly in the music, and a second visit made clear the dramaturgic deficiencies of the very vague and abstract treatment of the theme: on the other hand the originality of the opera was just as apparent as ever. This opera is concerned with things that really matter in our day, and even in its failures it is more stimulating than a good many other modern operas which in essence belong to the nineteenth century.

This time the important role of Isagel, the mysterious pilot who symbolises "the divine thoughts which are beyond all language", was danced by Loulou Portefaix. She had a difficult task in taking over this role, with its strange movements choreographed by Birgit Akesson in a style remote from the classical tradition. Mariane Orlando, who created the role, was fortunate in having previously created the chief female role in two of Birgit Akesson's ballets, whereas Loulou Portefaix had no such previous experience to help her. At first it looked as if she would be too stiff, but this was misleading: very quickly she got into the mood of the role and created a fine mysterious impression with her remarkably self-possessed galactic lyricism. Much of the texture of Isagel's movements is thin compared with what one finds in Birgit Akesson's own solo dances, but Isagel's final dance (in which she dances the disintegration of her soul) gives some hint of the true Akessonian style; and here Loulou Portefaix came into her own.

SEASON OF BALLET FILMS

IN addition to such familiar items as *Anna Pavlova* and *Gaieté Parisienne* (which has had an amazing run since 1941 in specialist cinemas) the first programme included a number of interesting items previously unknown in this country. The most exciting and successful of these was *Jerome Robbins' Ballets U.S.A.*, a film made for the United States Information Service at the time when Robbins and his dancers were preparing for their last European tour. After a few shots showing Robbins in a taxi in New York, we see him taking part in a rehearsal in a theatre, projecting a fascinating combination of relaxation and intensity as he works to achieve just these qualities in his dancers. Then comes the main section of the film: a rehearsal performance on the bare stage, in practice dress, of the final section of *N.Y. Export: Op. Jazz*. This begins as a theme and variations, with soloists and small groups taking the stage in turn to perform variations on the sequence of jazz movements established at the beginning. After a bridge passage (danced to a fast drum sequence) the dancers assemble in a tight group, centre stage, for the fugue finale: one by



Dancers of the Little Ballet Troupe from Bombay (whose season is reviewed on page 8). (l. to r.) Sarmistha Bardham, Suryamokhi Devi, Rekha Rao, Raba Chowdiury, and (in right background standing) Batsala Rao practising hand movements under the supervision of their dance director Appuni Karta.

one dancers separate out from the group as each "voice" enters, and there is a quick build-up to a very elaborate contrapuntal scene, with individual dancers performing on their own all over the stage. The working out of the musical form in space and movement is done with great skill, and almost any choreographer might profit from viewing this film many times. The direction (by Phil Martin and Peter Glushank) is neat and unobtrusive, with the cuts coming at obvious places such as the beginning of a new phrase.

Far more pretentious, but less rewarding, is the film *Le Spectre de la Danse*, devised and directed by Dominique Delouche. This is very ambitious in aim: "The dancer traces before the camera the lines and gestures which illustrate the discipline of her craft, expressing first the representative external aspect of her art and then the internal, its deeply spiritual character." Unfortunately the latter aspect of the dancer's art is shown with Lifar representing the choreographer, and giving a performance which might perhaps be described as deeply ham. There are two scenes showing Vyroubova dancing *Giselle*—which are just long enough to be tantalising (one wants to see more); in her second appearance we see her marking the movements of the mad scene in front of a back-projection screen on which is thrown a film of her in a performance of the mad scene: this is supposed to capture "a more essential Vyroubova"—why, I cannot imagine.

By far the most interesting sequence shows the great teacher Yves Brioux giving a class to Vyroubova and two children. Brioux has set himself the task of reviving the French school, and in this class we can see him laying stress on such things as extreme turn-out and a highly-arched foot which are characteristic of his school. It is interesting to see Brioux, in a lounge suit and ordinary shoes, dancing with grace and poise as he demonstrates the enchainements he wants. Throughout the film Vyroubova (well photographed in wide-screen by Jean-Jaques Rochut and Sammy Brill) is never off the screen for long, and is always worth looking at; but even she cannot overcome the supreme handicap of Lifar choreography in the 4th and 5th sequences.

Another film showed dancers of the Ballet de l'Etoile in three ballets—one by Dick Sanders and two by Maurice Béjart. The first two ballets (*Recreation* and *La Belle au Bois*) are of such petrifying silliness it is hard to understand anyone wasting film on them; but the third ballet, *Symphonie pour un Homme Seul*, is of interest because in its choreography, its film technique and above all in its music, it makes a real attempt at being experimental and avant-garde. By far the best thing in it is the musique concrète of Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry, the two great masters of this genre: their "score" blends distorted voices, musical notes and natural sounds in a way which seems dead right for film ballet, making use of the familiar sound equipment in new ways. The camera work is sometimes interesting, but the director (Louis Cuny) makes very little use of the power the film has of achieving novel effects by viewing the action from strange angles and putting together shots out of continuity; at one point there is a high angle with the camera tilted to its side, but this is never repeated, and so it almost seems an accident. Béjart

glowers in his usual manner in the title role, making great play with ropes hanging from above and doing his best to convince us that his gimmicks have cosmic significance; Michèle Seigneuret looks mysterious and alluring in a femme fatale role.

The second week of the season—surely the most elaborate season of ballet films ever staged—was devoted to Russian ballet. Most of the items were very familiar from previous seasons, but there was one important novelty—a fragment showing Semionova dancing *Swan Lake* with the Bolshoi Ballet about twenty years ago. This is of the highest interest, for Semionova was the first great classical ballerina to emerge in Russia after the dislocation caused by the Revolution. She was trained in Leningrad at the great Kirov school (originally known as the Maryinsky, and home of Russia's greatest dancers and choreographers), and danced at the Kirov theatre in the middle and late twenties. But in the late twenties the Soviet Government decided to build up the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow, and transferred to it some of the finest teachers and dancers of the Kirov—above all Semionova and Yermolaiev, then outstanding among the Kirov dancers. By 1940 Semionova was at the peak of her art, and reigned over the Bolshoi like a queen. Critics spoke of her heroic qualities, and these are indeed very obvious in the extract—coming through unmistakably despite the poor state of the print and its appallingly noisy sound track. She has tremendous assurance and stage presence, dominating the stage, but there is nothing forced or impetuous: she is calm, serene and gracious, combining ease and accuracy in her performance of steps with a very individual statuesque quality in her poses. Admittedly, her arms are rather heavy, but she uses them with such expressiveness and grace that this does not seem to matter: she has not picked up any of the Bolshoi mannerisms of hand movement, keeping her line infallibly pure and subtle, in the great Maryinsky tradition made familiar by Pavlova, Karsavina, Spessivsteva and many others.

What makes this film particularly precious is that it shows Semionova in a state of inspiration, dancing at her best. When not inspired, she was capable of dancing badly—as was made clear in a film taken of her dancing in *Swan Lake* some years later. Until now, this was the only record of her shown here, and it is a fine thing the bad impression left by it has been corrected: now, at last, we can see why Russian critics and audiences thought so highly of Semionova, and we can appreciate how valuable is her teaching and her coaching at the Bolshoi.

The main item in the Russian programme was the performance of *Giselle* by the Bolshoi, with Ulanova in the title role, as recorded on film by Paul Czinner at Covent Garden during the London season of the Bolshoi in 1956. In view of the fact that both Semionova and Ulanova were trained at the Kirov at roughly the same period, the contrast in style between these two great artists is both surprising and fascinating. By an extraordinary feat of artistry Ulanova transforms herself into a convincing girl of about sixteen: Semionova also has dramatic ability, but it would be hard to imagine someone so regal as a village girl. Semionova incorporates in many ways the ideal of Russian womanhood—whereas Ulanova is an artist unlike any other,

THE LITTLE BALLET TROUPE FROM BOMBAY

IT was a great pleasure to welcome to London this troupe, very well known in India: it came to the Scala Theatre on 12th September after a European tour in which (among other things) it won the top award at the International Theatre Festival in Paris.

This troupe has a style of its own, totally different from that of any other Indian group and deriving only to a small extent from the traditional dance techniques of India—though it does draw heavily on Indian folk-traditions, such as those of the puppeteer, the story-teller, the painter and the strolling players. Its basic idea owes its origin to Western ideas of the ballet, brought to India above all by Uday Shankar; and its “only begetter” is the remarkable choreographer Shanti Bardhan, who absorbed Shankarian ideas during six years which he spent at Shankar’s Cultural Centre at Almora, then struck out on his own path. For some years after the war, he worked with the Indian National Theatre producing large-scale historical and allegorical ballets—*The Spirit of India*, *Immortal India* and *The Discovery of India*. Though he was himself a gifted dancer trained in two traditional styles—those of Manipur and Tipperah—his daemon drove him on to create a new, very simplified style of dancing, and to break away to some extent from the religious aspects of Indian dancing. He was finally able to give full expression to his choreographic ideas when he founded his own group (the Little Ballet Group) in 1952: this consisted of half a dozen dedicated young dancers who had been working with him and believed very strongly in him and his ideas. With this group he produced *Scenes from the Ramayana*, which now has the same significance for the troupe that *The Green Table* has for the Ballets Jooss, and Vakhtangov’s production of *The Dybbuk* for Habima. Shanti Bardhan’s untimely death was a great blow to the troupe, but he left them with two remarkable ballets (*Scenes from the Ramayana* and *Panchtantra*) as a foundation for the repertoire, and the members of the troupe carry on with the task left them by their founder, dedicating themselves to his memory. Another large-scale ballet, *Meghaduta: the Cloud Messenger*, has been composed by the company’s dance director, Appuni Karta. In London the company performed two separate programmes—each with one of Shanti Bardhan’s ballets and a few folk-dances.

It was very clear, as soon as the *Ramayana* began, that Shanti Bardhan had been inspired by *Petrushka* in working out the structure of his ballet; in fact it began, just like *Petrushka*, with a scene at the fair, and then we had a number of scenes showing the story enacted by dancers taking the parts of puppets. But there was no slavish imitation of *Petrushka*; what we saw was an Indian fair, moving at a leisurely Indian tempo, and when the puppets appeared they moved like Indian puppets. In fact, the whole story was treated in the manner of a Rajasthani puppet play with an occasional delightful hint at various Indian styles of dancing.

The opening of the puppet play (after the crowd scene) was far too slow for the theatre; for what seemed a very long time flat figures representing the characters were moved on to the stage and off again, while a singer introduced the play. But once the “puppets” appeared the ballet established its own unique atmosphere—as convincing in its own way as the Kabuki dance scenes in which Kabuki actor-dancers imitate the Bunraku puppets. The high, square masks, exquisitely painted in a folk-idiom, were quite extraordinarily effective, imitating the large wooden heads of the Rajasthani puppets and suggesting (like all good masks) a play of expression across them as they moved through their stiff positions. In the same way the gloved

hands of the dancers, clenched into fists, had exactly the cramped, pathetic expressiveness of puppet hands. Appuni Karta was outstanding in two roles—that of the wicked Ravana and that of the king of the monkeys, Sugriva. As Ravana, he was dressed as a Kathakali demon-hero, and looked magnificent in his tall head-dress and blue face; his movements, too, had some of the character of Kathakali (the great classical dance-drama of Kerala), though of course they avoided all the Kathakali symbolic gestures and the elaborate foot-rhythms. The final battle between Ravana and Rama was staged in Kathakali style, with the two heroes swaggering around each other shaking their weapons. It would have been right for Ravana’s court dancers to use a Kathakali style as well; as it was, their folk-dance movements were out of place at court.

The Ramayana is one of the two great Indian epics, and has fantastic elements very well suited to a puppet ballet: in *Scenes from the Ramayana*, the monkeys and birds—together with the demon king Ravana—are in fact more convincing than the “straight” characters. Shanti Bardhan was therefore very wise in choosing as the subject for his next ballet the *Panchtantra*, the wonderful series of animal fables which is the ultimate origin of animal fables in dozens of countries across the world. These fables illustrate in the clearest possible way the genius of Indian folk art, with its rich fantasy and fertile inventiveness—also the deep kinship with the whole of life (both animal and vegetable) which has been characteristic of all Indian art from its origins some five thousand years ago.

Choreographically *Panchtantra* shows a definite advance on *Scenes from the Ramayana*. Basically the style is similar to that of *Scenes from the Ramayana*, even though there is no direct imitation of puppets: the dancers use very simple foot movements (in fact nearly always they move in a curious shuffle) and their imitations of animals have a childlike naïveté and simplicity which is far removed from the subtleties of Indian classical dancing (where the representation of animals is quite common). There are four animals who play important roles in these interlinked fables—the crow, the mouse, the turtle and the deer—and each is characterised with the charming simplicity of folk art in appropriate costume, make-up, head-dress and movements. Appuni Karta is again superb as the crow: his awkward, jerky little arm movements suggesting flying are altogether delightful, and one gets to long for the moment when once again he will emit a crow-like squawk. Sarmistha Bardhan (sister of the choreographer) is no less delightful as the little mouse, pawing the air with incessant febrility; and Gyan Sharma is marvellously ponderous in the role of the turtle, giving an impression very like that of Badger in *The Wind in the Willows*. Among the smaller roles, Sana Tomba stands out as a lightly-leaping deer and a very agile frog: he has a special quality of movement which makes him stand out under the heaviest disguise. In fact the whole of the corps de ballet “double” so skilfully, in a wide variety of gorgeous costumes and masks, that one has the impression of seeing a very large company—though in fact it has only thirteen dancers.

The folk dance items presented in the opening part of each programme are very much in the Uday Shankar tradition, with a strong emphasis on the dances of Manipur. The best of these items shown in London is *Pung*, a fine Manipur drum dance (performed by dance instructor Thingbaijan Babusingh) which brings back memories of the wonderful drum dance performed here some years ago by Bipin Sinha.

SEASON OF BALLET FILMS *Continued from page 7*

with her own fluid style which is really inimitable (though many try to imitate it).

If we cannot hope to see the Bolshoi at regular intervals, we may at least hope to see this film once a year or so. It is a film one can see over and over again, noticing something new each time—and at the same time getting a fresh slant on our native ballet. This time, for example, I was struck by the remarkable combination of discipline and vitality in the corps de ballet—not just in the marvellous scene in Act II where interlaced lines of Wilis cross each other, but also in a number of scenes in Act II where they support the action by sympathetic movements which are bold and yet never distract from the dancing and miming of the principals. I was also impressed with the miming of Alexander Radunsky as the Duke: his air of easy and totally unconscious authority suggests generations of aristocratic breeding: some day, perhaps, we may see a Duke of this solid quality in an English company—but I feel pessimistic about this.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH PROGRAMMES WILL BE
REVIEWED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The Royal Ballet

Week beginning

October 31st and November 7th: New Theatre, OXFORD

November 14th: Hippodrome, BRISTOL

November 21st: King’s Theatre, SOUTHSEA

November 28th: Hippodrome, BRIGHTON

Repertory includes

THE INVITATION

A new ballet by Kenneth MacMillan

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY
PINEAPPLE POLL

SWAN LAKE
SWEENEY TODD



Nadia Nerina and Nicolai Fadeychev in a scene from 'Giselle'

Photograph by Houston Rogers

*Like so many famous ballerinas
Nadia Nerina wears ballet shoes
made by*

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THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL

NEW MASSINE BALLET REVIEWED BY FERNAU HALL

LA *COMMEDIA UMANA*, a choreographic interpretation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, represented Massine's most ambitious creative contribution to this year's Nervi dance festival, and was performed in the second half of the week's season given by Massine's new company at the Edinburgh Festival. In some ways this may be considered Massine's most ambitious ballet yet—for it is in three acts, and includes no less than eight stories, quite apart from the prologue and epilogue.

The structure of the ballet shows that a great deal of scholarship and planning have gone into it: notably by Massine himself (responsible for the adaptation and choreography), but also by his literary adviser Vittore Branca, his composer Claude Arrieu and his designer Alfred Manessier. What they have done is to put the work within a frame corresponding to the *trionfo*—the procession which can be traced back to Ancient Greece (when it had a religious significance) and to Ancient Rome (when it was essentially political). In Italy of the 14th century the great writers Dante, Boccaccio and above all Petrarch gave new meaning to the *trionfo*, and later in the Renaissance, when the triumphal cars were accompanied by a troupe of dancers, the *trionfo* became a forerunner of the court ballet. When Massine introduces into his ballet allegorical figures such as Fortune, Love and The Spirit of Cunning he is being true to Boccaccio; moreover he has followed the development of *The Decameron* with remarkable fidelity, presenting the sequence of stories in almost exactly the order in which they occur among Boccaccio's hundred, keeping a fair balance between gay and sad stories, and respecting Boccaccio's classification of stories into categories. In the same way the composer Claude Arrieu has based his score entirely on tunes of roughly the period of the ballet—though, very wisely, he has not limited himself to Italian tunes: one may recognise even such English tunes as *Sumer Is Icumen In* and *The Cuddy Wren*. The costumes show that the designer Manessier has done his homework: in general outline they are true to the period, though to facilitate energetic dancing he has used materials which are very much more flimsy than in the 14th century, and has slit the women's skirts.

Nevertheless something has gone seriously wrong, and there is a wide gap between the ideas of Massine and his collaborators and their realisation on the stage. The title gives some hint of what went wrong: by changing this from *The Decameron* (with its suggestion of discreet bawdiness) to *La Commedia Umana* (with its implied reference to Dante's sublime poem *The Divine Comedy*), Massine suggests that he has ideas of grandiose symbolism which are not at all in line with his creative possibilities at this (or any other) stage of his career; nor are they attuned to Boccaccio's outlook—which does give some place to allegorical symbolism, but only a minor one. In the same way Massine has made the serious mistake of tackling eight different stories—with the result that he confuses the audience considerably, and makes it impossible for himself to come to grips with any one story. Add to this the fact that the music is extremely repetitive—almost inevitably so, in view of the nature of the material on which it was based—and there are a good many scenes in front of a plain curtain while the scenery was being changed. The fact is that Massine would have done far better to confine himself to one act and three sharply contrasted stories.

The opportunities lost by over-ambitiousness were to be seen very clearly in the first story, *Andreuccio*, which in Massine's summary treatment was robbed of most of its charm, irony and subtlety. The heroine of this story is a courtesan (Fiordaliso) who gulls Andreuccio—first by making him think she is a highborn lady who has fallen in love with him and wishes to enjoy his caresses, and then by making him think she is his sister: in the ballet all we see is a lady luring on a man and then suddenly leaving him, so that the high comedy of their meeting is quite lost. (Massine is clearly far more interested in the slapstick comedy of Andreuccio falling through the lavatory floor.) Fortunately Fiordaliso is danced by Yvonne Meyer, a gifted artist last seen at Edinburgh with the Edinburgh Festival Ballet: she moves seductively and looks irresistible in a dusky Mediterranean way.

The most clearly outlined and effective of the stories was the second to be presented, *Ginevra*—which has a triangular situation rather like that of *Othello* in which a man convinces a husband (by trickery) that his wife is unfaithful to him. Even here there was nothing memorable or expressive in the choreography (which seemed turned out by Massine in a mechanical way, as in so much of his work since 1937), but Duska Sifnios acted and danced beautifully in the role of the noble and self-reliant Ginevra—reminding us of some Shakespearean heroines as she disguised herself into an elegant young man. Vassili Sulich swaggered in a manner appropriate to the wicked Ambrogiolo (who convinces Ginevra's husband of her infidelity).

From the programme *Nastagio*, one of two violent and tragic tales in Act II, looked very promising: "Nastagio is a frustrated lover, who is haunted by a vision of a woman in torment, who is beset by devils, torn by hounds and pursued by a fierce knight." One might expect this fantastic theme to appeal very strongly to an expressionist choreographer like Massine, who in fact did his finest work in *La Symphonie Fantastique*. But the result was very disappointing, with none of the dream-like fantasy, satire and horror demanded by the story: the Red Devil, for example, was so tame and conventional he might have strayed from a fancy-dress ball. Moreover Massine falsified the dramatic shape of Boccaccio's grim and ironic tale by changing the ending: whereas in *The Decameron* Nastagio forces his own cruel lady to watch the terrible things which happen to the cruel lady of the ghostly vision—thus bringing the former to change her attitude to Nastagio—Massine converts Nastagio's cruel lady into a dummy with no character at all, and imposes a woolly, romantic ending which had little relation to the story. (As the programme puts it: "He is finally united to his beloved Traversari only when she too has shared the vision.") By far the best thing in Massine's choreographic treatment of this story was Jenny Trevelyan's dancing in the role of Traversari: she has a fine sense of line, and gave to her hand movements a real mediaeval flavour, suggesting the graceful figures in old manuscripts. From a dramatic point of view she did all that was possible with the empty role, and it was tempting to speculate what this excellent British dancer would have made of Boccaccio's Traversari. Milorad Miskovitch was his usual self—tense and slightly mannered—in the role of Nastagio.

According to the programme the final section (Act III and Epilogue) was due to include no less than four stories; but Massine—no doubt feeling slightly uneasy about the extreme complexity of the ballet—suppressed one of these stories, *Elena*. He was probably right to do this, though I should have liked the opportunity of seeing the gorgeous Duska Sifnios in the title role. I also regretted missing the great dancer Leon Woizikowski in the title role of *Calandrino*—a farce in which Massine combined two tales about a simpleton. Cristian Uboldi's dancing in the role lacked all the necessary bravura and satirical exaggeration.

Each act was framed within processions which brought together the lords and ladies who are supposed to tell the tales (while they shelter from the plague), allegorical figures such as Pestilence, and characters from the stories. These processions followed a regular and dull pattern, and by the end of the evening had become intolerable: here Massine found himself a prisoner of his own planning—for it is hard to believe he took much pleasure in working on such dull material. On the other hand he has always shown a marked flair for finales, working his ballets up to a fine explosion of high spirits in their last few minutes. In the finale to *La Commedia Umana* he brought what must have been practically the entire company on the stage, but for some reason confined himself to a few short and separate dances, without any of the drive and sweep one might have expected.

It is possible that he was prevented from building up a satisfactory finale by the music, which did not build up at all. In fact throughout the ballet Claude Arrieu never really came to grips with the problems involved in adapting old music to the needs of modern choreography. In some respects he kept too close to the originals, preserving the phrasing and the regular pattern of repeats, and largely ignoring the development of the action; at the same time he gave the music a lush nineteenth-century orchestration which took away much of its savour and provided a wrong aural atmosphere for these 14th century tales. Stravinsky has given a very clear lead in reworking old music in such a way as to suit twentieth-century dancing, and it is hard to understand why Claude Arrieu has learned nothing from him.

Manessier's costumes succeeded on the whole, though one would have liked rather more imaginative colour-harmonies. His settings—small flats and rostrums set up on the stage in various combinations, to suit the requirements of the action in each scene—looked very odd on the stage of the Empire Theatre in Edinburgh: this may have been due to the fact that they were originally designed for an open-air theatre, but no doubt much of the trouble may be attributed to the shockingly inadequate technical facilities of this stage, and above all to poor lighting equipment. It is high time Edinburgh built itself a theatre where ballet can be shown under good conditions.

Though *La Commedia Umana* had many faults, it made clear that Massine has formed in Les Ballets Européens de Nervi a company that includes a number of talented artists from an extraordinary variety of countries, and I look forward eagerly to seeing these artists presented by Massine in the rest of their repertoire.



Boris Khokhlov with Rimma Karelskaya in *Swan Lake* Act 3. Photo taken in London by Houston Rogers

Exclusive Ballet Today Interview

BORIS KHOKHLOV of the Bolshoi Ballet

by JANET SINCLAIR

THROUGH the very kind co-operation of the London and Moscow interpreters on hand during the Bolshoi season, Mrs. Anna Barr and Miss Irina Ukova, it was possible to obtain interviews with some of the dancers appearing recently at the Albert Hall and on our list was Boris Khokhlov.* So after watching class we moved round in the stalls to where he was sitting, looking rather tired and pale like all dancers (and this one had been working on a Sunday) in a silk dressing-gown, with Zvyagina, dressed in her "Pheasant" costume for the benefit of an artist making a sketch of her, and Mrs. Barr.

One's first impression on meeting Khokhlov is of an extremely shy young man, at once a little younger and far more strikingly handsome than one would imagine from his stage performances. So shy did he appear, in fact, that at one point Zvyagina broke in to say "It is better that I answer questions about him, for you understand it is not very nice for him to talk about himself." However, one or two facts—perhaps the most important—we did succeed in discovering

from Khokhlov himself, including the answer to the key question apropos all dancers: why did he take up dancing? He began dancing when he was nine years old, because he had an older brother taking lessons and the young Boris went along with him. After three years the brother gave up. Boris did not. Now one of the leading danseurs nobles of the Bolshoi, his favourite roles are, in his own words: "All the Tchaikovsky Princes, Don Quixote, and the Prince in *Cinderella*." When talking about himself, only one fact seemed of particular importance to him, for he repeated it in order that there could be no mistake: he dances a great deal with Struchkova, and of this he seemed, in his unassuming way, to be proud. It was interesting also to hear that he dances "Blue Bird", and also *The Ocean and the Pearls*—but not in the choreography of Gorsky; in the new version of *The Little Hump-Backed Horse*, produced recently by Alexander Radunsky, whom London will remember as Capulet.

Khokhlov's shyness when talking about himself is paralleled by his modesty on the stage—indeed, if modesty in a dancer could be described as a disadvantage then this is surely the sole disadvantage under which he could be said to be. All these Russian

dancers are almost preternaturally modest on the stage, perhaps because ballet dancing in Russia, though an honoured profession, is yet looked on as a profession like any other, and a job in which the professional is the servant of his audience, though this audience may be made up exclusively of labourers and truck-drivers. It is this apparent inability to advertise themselves on the stage—they perform the most fantastic feats with an ingenuous, deprecating expression—which causes inobservant or chauvinistic critics to say that "our boys are just as good". But Khokhlov does not display even the extrovert exuberance of Yevdokimov or the serious magnificence of Farmanyantz and therefore unless one watches him very carefully one can be seduced into applauding the other two dancers with more enthusiasm, although in fact Khokhlov is in some respects their master.

The Russians seem to divide their dancers more strictly into more categories than do other countries—and yet, paradoxically, each category has a far wider scope than any relative Western classification. There are the entirely non-classical dancers such as Levaschov, who in addition to their primary function of portraying characters are also able effortlessly to perform double *tours de*

*Janet Sinclair is married to Leo Kersley. Kersley's interview with Georgii Farmanyantz was published in our October issue.—Ed.



basque ending on the knee, and the like: there are the strong, stocky types of Farman-yantz, Yevdokimov, Yagudin, and doubtless Messerer, who perform both the classical dancing of "Blue Bird", *Giselle* pas de deux, *The Ocean and the Pearls* and *Flames of Paris* with the concomitant double work, and also character roles such as Nurali or one of the numerous Jesters; and there are the pure classical dancers of the type Yuri Zhdanov, Fadayechev and Khokhlov. And a further branch of this latter type would seem to be the partner who specialises in the steering of the ballerina through all sorts of lifts, to the extent of throwing her in the air in a horizontal double turn and catching her as she comes down (Lapauri, Yuri Zhdanov, Begak, Vlasov). Of course this classification of male dancers can only be a rough one, since into which category could one place—for example—Piotr Khomutov, whose range at the Albert Hall extended from *Masquerade* through *Spring Water* and the Polonaise and Cracovienne to the wilder type of folk dancing?

With Khokhlov, however, included in the classification *danseur noble*, we can feel ourselves on something approximating safe ground. Khokhlov made his début outside Russia in 1956 in the purely classical roles of Siegfried, the Troubadour in *Romeo and Juliet* and Vassili in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. If there is nothing in our experience to which we can compare Georgii Farman-yantz (unless it be Massine—and even there the analogy is by no means satisfactory), with Khokhlov at least we should be at home. When he made his London début, not only was the attention of the audience primarily focused on that factor practically unknown in English ballet, the character dancer, in the form of Koren, Lapauri, Radunsky, Levaschov, Farman-yantz, Yagudin, Sekh, Richter and

Khomyakov: but also Khokhlov himself took second place to the senior *danseurs nobles* Kondratov, Zhdanov, Gofman and Fadayechev, and so it was not really until these recent Albert Hall performances that London audiences could concentrate upon, and fully appreciate, the extraordinary talents of this most gifted dancer. Within the classification of *danseur noble*, Khokhlov has an extraordinarily wide range, both technically and in characterisation. He appears to have no particular pet steps, but whatever is required of him he can perform, whether it be double turns in the air ending on a *plié* in arabesque, *petits tours* faster, yet still clean and unblurred, than those of any other dancer I have ever seen, or the series of *relevé pirouettes* in the *Don Quixote* coda: and all he does is performed with such beautiful stage manners and such lack of vulgarity that one wishes that he would show off just a bit, because otherwise the ignorant tend to overlook his quite outstanding qualities. This question of stage manners is very important; it seems ingrained into every Soviet dancer; and it makes such a refreshing change among male dancers from the attitude sometimes to be observed in the Western male of "Here I come! Just look at what I'm doing!" Good manners are also vital in double work, and here too Khokhlov is outstanding. Not only does he partner expertly and enhance the ballerina's presence and performance in every possible way; he also looks at ease and never seems to be concentrating unduly on what he is doing, and this impression of relaxed confidence transmits itself instantaneously to the audience.

All Russian dancers seem to have style, and Khokhlov is no exception. Moreover, he can alter his style or superimpose another upon it with ease, and this is possibly what makes him the most versatile of the younger Bolshoi *danseurs nobles*; though physically he is also blessed with that rarity, straight legs (the majority of humanity falls into one or other of Noverre's categories of *arqué*—bowlegged—or *jarreté*—knock-kneed. Through this unusual formation he can combine the elegant, languorous extensions of the *jarreté* with the elevation, ballon and vitality of the typical *arqué*: this is doubtless what makes his performance in the pas de deux from *Les Sylphides*, in which every scrap of personal individuality is submerged in the Fokine manner, so outstanding;

and what a pleasure it was to see even this short extract performed not by apprentice dancers—so often the case in the ballet world today—but by the leaders of the troupe, and in particular by a man who can perform romantic, dreamy steps without looking effeminate! This metamorphosis is thrown into even stronger relief when contrasted with Khokhlov's performance in the pas de deux from *Don Quixote*, which is full of bravura, elegance, rhythm and sheer enjoyment of movement.

At the end of our interview, while the interpreter was busy elsewhere, I embarked upon a few words of stumbling Russian. Instantly Khokhlov became animated and, emboldened by my example, began to try his English—if not fluent, yet spoken with a very good accent. He was immensely interested in copies of *Ballet Today* which I had brought with me, and immediately began to ask questions about British ballerinas and particularly about *La Fille mal Gardée*; he was enthusiastic about Grant, Holden and Blair, and especially about Nerina, with whom he would very much like the opportunity of dancing when she is in Russia (in October). At our last meeting with him, by chance, in—of all places!—the pit bar at Sadler's Wells Theatre, I was able to give him several back numbers of *Ballet Today* which I had promised him together with a copy of the illustrated souvenir produced for the cancelled visit to Moscow of the Sadler's Wells Ballet in 1956. (It was not without shame that I had to point out to him that no fewer than ten of the photographs are captioned wrongly!) Our last sight, in fact, of the Bolshoi dancers was a whole crowd of them, clustered round Khokhlov, reading *Ballet Today* over his shoulder. This keen interest shown in Western ballet by all the dancers, coupled with the fact that, I understand, Fokine's son has recently gone to Moscow with all his father's manuscripts and notes, shows that Soviet ballet may be ready to begin to assimilate some of the good points of Western ballet. Certainly if goodwill and friendliness can assist, such men as Boris Khokhlov can make an important contribution to friendly relations, not only between ballet companies, but between people: and ordinary people can raise the Iron Curtain on both sides by merely ignoring it—as those Soviet dancers I have met have always done.



Photos

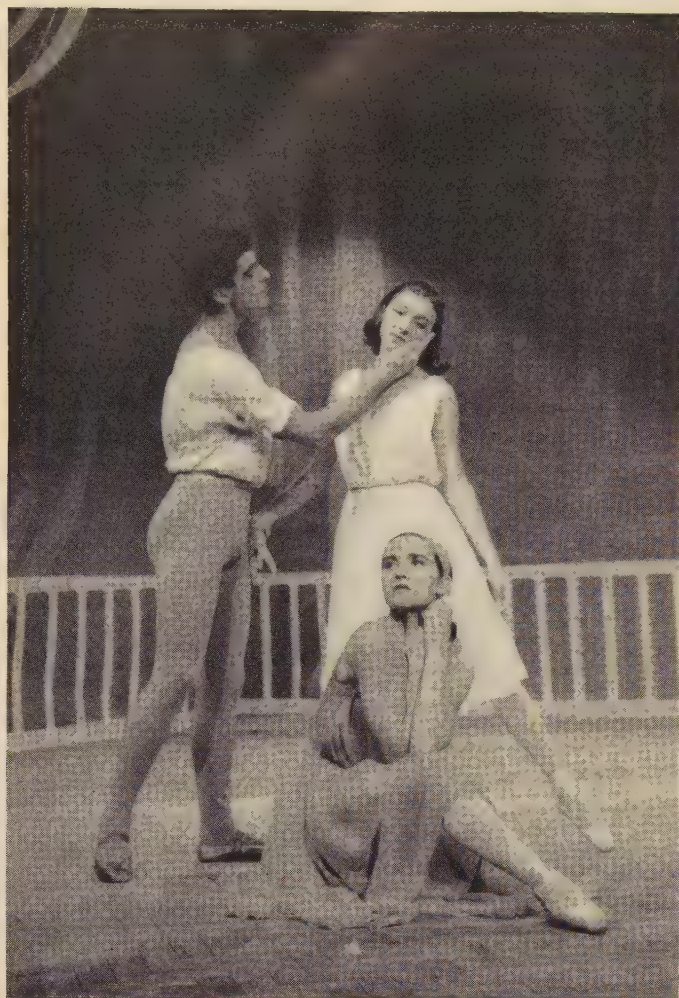
Above: In *Romeo and Juliet* at the Bolshoi. Nina Chkalova as Juliet's friend and Boris Khokhlov as the Minstrel.

Right: In the pas de trois Act I *Swan Lake* with Marina Kondratieva and L. Chadarain.



With Nina Timofeyeva in *Swan Lake* Act 2.

Photo taken in London by Houston Rogers



Ballade Para Três

produced by the author for Portuguese Television. Carlos Trincheiras, Wanda da Silva and Isabel Ruth (in foreground)

Photo: J. Testa Santos



NORMAN DIXON the author of this article has spent nearly four months in Portugal staging his ballet *Preciosa* at the famous San Carlos Opera in Lisbon, and creating a new ballet, *Ballade Para Três* specially for Portuguese National Television. He also gave classes, taught a number of pas de deux and produced a recital version of *Les Sylphides*.

Due to the efforts of Wanda da Silva (who danced in Dixon's television ballet and who originally studied for a number of years at the Royal Ballet School) the Gulbenkian Foundation have promised their support to help raise the standard of technique in Portugal and prepare the more advanced dancers for professional work. Future plans include the foundation of a Ballet School incorporating lessons in art, music, and the history of the dance. Eventually an educational branch will be attached.

Meanwhile Dixon has been given a contract to return to Portugal to take up a post as director of the Upper School. Miss da Silva will direct the Lower School. A small recital group is to be formed to perform in Lisbon and tour the provinces, and a presentation will be made every eight weeks on Portuguese Television.

In Britain Norman Dixon was for some years principal dancer with the Ballet Rambert Company, premiered three ballets, *Voice in the Wilderness*, *The Cord* and *Violent Rhythm* for the Sunday Ballet Club and formed a Company *Ballet Venture* 1960 for the presentation of his works in theatre-in-the-round at Croydon's Pembroke Theatre. Dixon's ballet *Preciosa* was created during the season at this theatre.

Preciosa

with (l. to r.) Leonor Durjinsky, Rena Castilho, Marlene Barros.

Photo: Luis Mendes



ballet around the world



Fête et Nuages, with choreography by Margarida de Abreu, music Debussy

PORTUGAL

by NORMAN DIXON

THE Verde Gaio, Portuguese Ballet Company was formed in 1940 by Frances Graca and founded by Antonio Ferro. The company is financed entirely by the State and can be called professional in the accepted sense. Most of their productions are based on folklore and consist of national dance. They appear in the operas during the annual season at the San Carlos but present no complete programmes in the National Opera House.

Margarida de Abreu's company was formed in 1943 and the majority of Portuguese dancers have at some time passed through her hands. Most of the dancers in the present company study in the conservatoire and give, most enthusiastically, of their free time and rehearsals. They receive no financial reward for their services except perhaps a nominal fee for expenses. Performances are given in the provinces and receive a considerable amount of support from an encouraging audience. Occasional presentations are made on television but the important event of the year is a brief season at the San Carlos Opera House, which is financed to a small extent by the Ministry of Propaganda.

Elsa Mastbaum and Bento José da Camara who have both been leading dancers for some time, retire from this group at the end of the year, and will be sadly missed.

Madame de Abreu will then be without a ballerina. Manuela Varella Cid is very popular with the Portuguese audience and undoubtedly has talent. Manuela Fontes has a pleasing personality and great charm but lacks technique.

Carlos Trincheiras is considered the most important male dancer, possessing fine stage presence and strong dramatic abilities; he should develop into a first-rate dancer. Fernando Mateus is a good technician and could become an exciting dancer. Amando Jorge is a sound performer and shows obvious talent as a ballet designer, and Jorge Trincheiras is one of the most gifted of male dancers. In fact the Portuguese male dancers have a tremendous capacity for hard work and, generally speaking, are more advanced technically than the girls and almost all show some promise.

During the American Ballet Theatre's season in Lisbon, William Dollar, the company's ballet master, gave open classes for the Portuguese dancers. These I was able to watch and it gave me an opportunity to judge more fully the possibilities of development in Portuguese ballet. Apart from the already established dancer-teachers—i.e., Ana Mascolo, Violette Kenolle and Luna Andermatt—I saw for the first time two dancers who were to create roles for me in *Ballade para Tres*. Isabel Ruth and

Wanda da Silva, both extremely promising youngsters, the former, given the right opportunities and time for perfection of technique, would become a particularly fine artist of outstanding quality. José Salavisa showed particular promise. There are teachers by the dozen, many of them little more than students themselves. This is a most serious problem and must be tackled if any progress is to be made.

Unfortunately as yet there is nothing to encourage the young dancer to make ballet a career. There appears to be a great mistrust amongst teachers and dancers alike, and development is crippled by their inability to work together as a whole. This may be due to the fact that they receive no encouragement financially or otherwise from the authorities, despite the growing public interest. The young dancers who sincerely desire some guidance, security and a permanent group in which to work, and gain experience, will continue to be frustrated and lose their exuberant enthusiasm.

This is a land of promise and I should like to think that to some small extent my stay in Lisbon brought their enthusiasm to a new level, but if Portugal is to take its place in ballet history, a great deal needs to be done before real development can be made. I am looking forward to taking a small part in that development.



Ballerinas from La Scala, photographed in the piazza before the world-famous theatre in Milan.

From left to right: Carmen Puthod, Vera Colombo, Carla Fracci, Fiorella Cova, Elettra Morini, Vivienne Bocca, Liliana Così, Gianna Ricci.

Photo: Farabola.

Backstage

HONEYMOON COUPLE Sally Judd and John Gilpin leaving London air terminal. With Anton Dolin and Belinda Wright they are to dance in South Africa for eight weeks. Sally is seen carrying her mascot Juanita.



EVERY CHOREOGRAPHER KNOWS THIS stage in rehearsals, the dreadful moment when he is convinced that nothing will ever be the way he wants it. Jack Carter seen here rehearsing Belinda Wright (left) and Anita Landa (right) need not have worried, his *Grand Pas des Fiancées* turned out to be a delightful addition to Festival Ballet's repertoire.

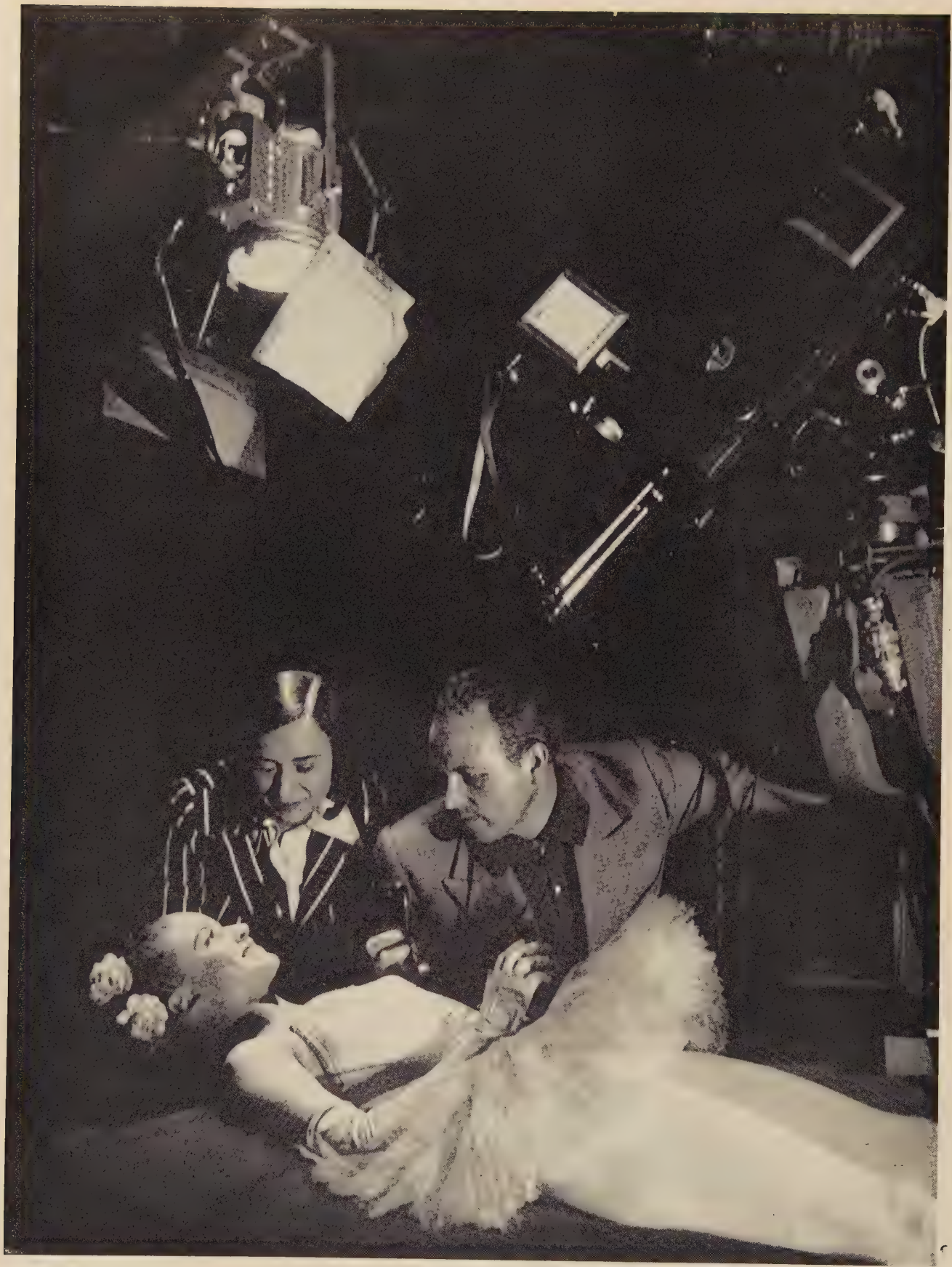
Photo: Ian James.

THE CLOSE of Festival Ballet's summer season in London, five of the Company's artists were invited to take part in the Bermuda Ballet week organised by Mme. Ana Roje.

leaving London for this engagement are (l. to r.) Jean Pierre-Alban, Deirdre O'Conaire, Marina Marilyn Burr, Ben Stevenson and Jelko Yuresha.



ROWENA JACKSON, who resigned from the Royal Ballet at the height of her career to lead a domesticated life as the wife of Philip Chatfield, is seen here with their three months old son Paul James. Philip also gave up his career as a dancer when he settled in New Zealand, and is now a member of a firm importing beauty salon equipment, but husband and wife still do all they can to further the development of ballet in the country where they have now made their home.



A picture taken very early in the career of Violetta Verdy, showing choreographer Yvonne Georgi and cameraman Robert Lefevre preparing the young dancer for a shot during the filming of *Ballerina*

Violette Verdy

by SONIA ROBERTS

On December 1st, 1931, a little girl called Nelly Guillermin was born at Pont l'Abbe in Brittany. "The same birthdate as Markova, so I suppose it's a lucky day for dancers." Today, under the name Violette Verdy, a title she adopted in 1949 when she starred in the film *Ballerina*, she is one of the world's most versatile and international dance stars. To put it in her own words: "For the past ten years, a suitcase has been my home. I am the kind of artist who finds herself one evening dancing *Cinderella* at La Scala, Milan, the next performing a jazz ballet for Roland Petit in Paris and the day after that back in New York doing strictly classical works with Balanchine. I think in the course of my dance career I have visited nearly every country in the world, except Japan, and I am going there next year."

As a child Verdy was delicate. "I did not eat enough, or sleep enough and I was far too thin," she recalls. Dancing was taken up on the advice of her family doctor. "He thought that I needed more exercise—and jokingly said that it would be nice to get tired to music. My mother had always adored the ballet, so the matter was decided then and there." Today there is still an air of frailty about Verdy. Off stage she eschews exoticism and one is apt to wonder from whence this tiny, attractive, yet quite ordinary looking girl with the neat chignon and spectacles draws the reserves of talent and energy, which never fail to amaze both her public and her fellow artists.

The clue that one is in presence of a rather unusual personality lies in Verdy's eyes. One minute sparkling with mischief and the next steely and serious, they are of the particular light shade of blue so often ascribed in fiction to either mystics or fanatics, and about her work at least Verdy is something of a fanatic.

It is perhaps typical of Verdy that her most recent appearance in London, the leading role in the musical *The Princess*, should have been undertaken during her summer leave from the New York City Ballet. "I suppose you would call it a busman's holiday?" she queried, "and choreographically speaking, of course, coming from Balanchine repertoire to *The Princess* is covering the dance north to south. Yet I loved doing it. Every role that I accept in every type of work must become important to me. I must believe in it implicitly—and be able to get empathic about—or it wouldn't be me, and it certainly wouldn't come alive on the stage.

"This is why I always find it difficult to answer the question, 'which is my favourite role,'" she continued. "All my roles were favourites, at the time, although I did particularly enjoy dancing *Carmen* and

Le Loup, the latter particularly because at the time I created this role I think it was ideally suited to both my technical abilities and to my personality. Moreover it is the kind of role that I would describe as a lyrical heroine role. I see myself primarily as a lyrical dancer."

Asked if the choice of these roles meant that she preferred narrative to abstract ballets, Verdy firmly said no. Abstract roles, she explained, offered a much greater challenge to the dancer. "After all, any one can go in for histrionics—dramatic gestures aren't so very difficult," she said, waving her arms wildly as an illustration of the ease of this type of acting. "However, when you are performing an abstract work, all the action, the drama and the mood must still be there, only they must be conveyed not through the media of obvious natural movement but purely through classic technique. This is a true intellectual exercise.

"It is vitally important, as I see it, that a dancer must dance not only with her legs but also with her head. You see, as a dancer born in France, trained by Russians, and working most of her adult life with English or American ballet companies, I think of myself as a personality composed of several elements—a mixture, like a heraldic beast, a griffon or a yale. My legs, and that is the most basic part of a dancer's equipment, are Russian . . . or perhaps I should say that my legs are international, for correct training in the Russian method gives to a dancer an international—a universal—means of communication. To us Russian training is what Church Latin was to the clergy of the Middle Ages. I was trained from the age of 10 by Mme. Rossane. I was her pupil until she died, and she, more than any other person, formed me as a dancer. She was that extraordinary phenomenon the artist who never fully succeeded as a ballerina, yet achieves importance in the guidance of others. To me she is one of the few really great teachers. Later when I joined the Ballet Champs Elysées I took lessons with Victor Gsovsky, who was, of course, their ballet master.

"My body, when I am dancing, belongs to the country in which the ballet is set. Thus in *Miss Julie* I am Scandinavian. My head—well, I was born and brought up in France, so I suppose I always think of myself as a Frenchwoman, but when I dance I wear, like a hat on top of my French head, the nationality of the company with which I am working. Thus with ballet Rambert or Festival Ballet, my hat is entirely English."

The secret of her extraordinary ability to switch mood and manner of performance lies in her attitude to her work. "For me this is possible because there is nothing better to do,



In Miss Julie Photo: Maurice Seymour

nothing I would like to do better than what I am doing. It is not difficult to tackle works of completely different character if one is prepared to dance with one's head as well as one's legs. After all my legs can only work—what, eight hours each day—and that still leaves twelve for thinking about the roles I am to dance. When I recently joined Balanchine's company I had six new roles to learn in a month" (Violette's repertory at the moment, incidentally, covers no less than 26 current roles), "I thought before I tried that I couldn't do it, but I did. To familiarise myself with the music I bought records of all the works concerned and played them at home each day when I got back from the theatre. To my horror Gounod's *Symphony in G* had not been recorded, so for that I had to acquire a piano score and play it myself."

Speaking of her association with Balanchine, Verdy explained that working with her present company had brought home to her more forcibly than perhaps ever before the relationship of dancer and orchestra. "Technically and musically, I suppose the New York City ballet must be among the greatest in the world," she said, "and it cannot be stressed often enough the importance of understanding, really under-



Violette Verdy

in *Divertimento*

as the Bride in *Le Loup*.



standing, the dancer's place in the music—how he or she must fundamentally appreciate being one with the orchestra—an integral part of the music—and as much tied to creating a certain section—and to coming in at exactly the right point as a violin or a piccolo.”

Violette began her theatrical life as a child prodigy. Her first public appearance was at the age of 11 in a Roland Petit ballet called *The Poet*, in which she appeared with two other little girls. Petit was so impressed with the child's performance that he offered her a contract until she was eighteen. This immensely pleased Violette's mother, who had previously considered sending her to the Opera Ballet School, but had demurred because she feared that the degree of general education offered was not of the same standard as on the ballet side. “My mother felt it was of the utmost importance that I should be well educated in literature and modern languages—oh, and Latin—and I am always grateful for her insistence on this,” said Verdy. “Working so often away from my native land languages have been of great value to me—and besides I think it most important that a dancer should have an all-round understanding of the arts.”

When Petit's early group grew into the Ballet des Champs Elysées Verdy naturally remained with them. In 1950 she joined the Ballet de Paris, and became their principal dancer in 1953. In 1954 she joined Festival Ballet and was with them throughout their tour of the United States. More recently she has danced with Ballet Rambert and at La Scala. She has also acted with J. L. Barrault at the Theatre Marigny in Paris. Her present appointment is, of course, as a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet.

Asked about her ambitions for the future, Verdy replied that in her opinion ambitions were so often governed by opportunities—that it was impossible to gauge one without knowing the other. However, whatever her future, she is certain of one thing—that her mother will continue to travel with her and be her constant supporter, mentor and friend.

... ROLES DANCED ...

Corps de ballet roles in: *Les Forains*, *Treize Danses*, *Orphée*, *Le Rendez-vous*, *La Creation*.

Solo roles in: *Les Chaise Musicales*, *Arlequinade*, *Romanza Romana*, *Les Facheux*, *Le Rendez-vous Sentimental*.

Leda in *Les Amours de Jupiter*.
La Jeune Fille in *Treize Danses*.
Princess in *Casse Noisette*.
Bluebird in *Aurora's Wedding*.
Don Quixote pas de deux.
Grand pas classique (Victor Gsovksy).

Juliet in Lifar's *Romeo and Juliet*.
Fleur de Lys in *Esmeralda*.
Marguerite in Ashton's *Mephisto Waltz* (otherwise known as *Visions of Marguerite*).
La Peri (Roland Petit's Ballets de Paris).
The girl in *Le Loup* (a creation).
Carmen in Petit's *Carmen*.

for Ballet Rambert Leading role in *La Masque de la Mort Rouge*.

Swanhilda in *Coppelia*.

Giselle in *Giselle*.

for American Ballet Theatre Leading roles in *Sylphides*.

Offenbach in the Underworld.

Odette in *Lac des Cygnes* *Combat*.

Miss Julie in Birgit Cullberg's *Miss Julie* (a creation).
Medea in Birgit Cullberg's *Medea* (creation).
The Princess in *The Princess* by Jo Anna (a creation).
Leading role in *Episodes* ballet in which Balanchine combined with Martha Graham.
Leading role in *Balance à Trois* (at the Enghien Festival).
Leading role in *Orphée* (Aix Festival) to Gluck music.
Cinderella in *Cendrillon* at La Scala Milan—the Prokofiev version.
Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* at La Scala—Prokofiev version.

in Balanchine ballets with New York City Ballet: *Stars and Stripes*—solo in 2nd Movement; pas de deux.

Glinka pas de trois.
Medea—Princess and title role.
Apollon Musagète—Calliope.
Symphony in C—solo roles 1st, 3rd movements.
Western Symphony—solo roles 1st, 3rd movements.
Gounod Symphony—principal role.
Divertimento—one of five soloists.
Agon—solo role in branle gai.
Night Shadow—Sonnambulist.

The Firebird—title role.
Serenade—solo roles allegro and Russian dance.
Tchaikovsky pas de deux.
Swan Lake—Odette.
Figures in the Carpet—solo roles various episodes.
Episodes—solo role in Webern symphony Op. 7.
Orpheus—Euridice.
Concerto Barocco—solo role.

Has appeared in the films: *Ballerina*, *Olivia* (this starred Edwige Feuillere), *Malatesta*.
Made a series of television films in 1949 and 1959 starred in the famous Dinah Shore show on coast to coast American Television.



The dancers pose for our photographer Ian James in the shadow of Big Ben

LONDON VISIT OF

GABRIELLA LAKATOS AND FERENC HAVAS

by DENNIS GRAY STOLL

GABRIELLA LAKATOS and Ferenc Havas, prima ballerina and premier danseur of the State Opera House, Budapest, made their London début with Festival Ballet in *Swan Lake* (Act II) and the Black Swan Pas-de-Deux. During a fortnight of appearances in August and September, they subsequently danced an almost complete *Giselle*, the Grand Pas de Deux from Asafiev's *Flames of Paris*, and an enchanting Gipsy Dance from Act III of the modern Hungarian ballet *The Kerchief*.

Their partnership is so perfect that I can well believe what Gabriella Lakatos told John Gilpin, "Now I would find it hard to dance with anyone but Ferenc."

I inquired how long they had been working together. "Eight years," she said. I asked her to confirm this as they both looked so young that it seemed impossible.

"I danced the Girl in Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin* in 1949," she went on. "The choreography is by my great master, Gyula Harangozó. We did it in Oriental costume

then. In 1954 it was revived in modern costume—San Francisco style."

Her English is like herself, very individual and alive, and during her stay in London it became more and more fluent. Ferenc Havas was unable to talk to me without an interpreter, though we had several amusing interchanges in mime. In the end we were relieved to find that music was a language we both understood.

Like all great artists Lakatos gives a simple and clear characterisation of Odette, making one aware of the tragedy that haunts the bewitched swan-maiden. She makes one feel that the Prince's faithfulness can free her from the spell, his betrayal destroy all hope. Only in moments of exaltation does she allow herself to forget her fate.

Her Odile is a true daughter of the Evil Genius. Seductive in black plumage, her head proudly set with a small glittering crown, she leaps forward boldly leading the Prince by the hand. Her style becomes sharp,

impetuous, demanding. She deceives the Prince not only by her external likeness to Odette, but by her mysterious smile, a flash of the eyes, an unexpected flicker of emotion, a dazzling whirl of *tours*. Havas as the Prince allows himself to be persuaded of the sincerity of her feelings with just the right reluctance, the appropriate wonder at the change in his beloved Odette, to make his error convincing. Lakatos is the dominant partner in this pas de deux. Havas's fine support is a masterpiece of self-subordination for the good of the whole. They more than deserved the warm reward the audience gave them.

In the Grand Pas de Deux from *Flames of Paris*, which they danced later in the season, the partnering position was reversed. As the young revolutionary, Philippe, Havas assumed the dominant role, and with bounding technique and fiery masculinity led the simple peasant girl, Jeanne, in their brilliant festive dance before the people in the Paris square. Many in the audience were



Ferenc Havas leaps high in the air over Gabriella Lakatos during rehearsal at Festival Hall, London.

Photo: Ian James



THE AUTHOR OF THIS ARTICLE

DENNIS GRAY STOLL

is the younger son of Sir Oswald Stoll who put on the first truly classical Russian ballet that London had ever seen—*The Sleeping Princess* with the Diaghilev Company at the Alhambra Theatre in 1921.



He himself became conductor of the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo in 1936, working with Fokine. His ballet compositions are widely performed today, and he has had two recent B.B.C. commissions for twelve pieces in the Oriental style for broadcasting overseas. Author of *Music Festivals of Europe*, he has also written and broadcast about Indian music and dancing, and of Danish, Dutch, Lithuanian and Soviet Ballet. Here he writes a profile of two great Hungarian dancers he saw at Festival Hall.

Left: Gabriella Lakatos and Ferenc Havas at the Erkel Theatre in Jenő Kenessey's four-act ballet Song of Bihari, with choreography adapted by Viktor Fülöp.

moved to see that instead of the French tricolour on their sashes, they wore the red, white and green of Hungary.

During an orchestral rehearsal at Festival Hall, Lakatos and Havas watched Belinda Wright and John Gilpin rehearse *Giselle*. They themselves had to dance *Giselle* and Albrecht the next night, and many changes of tempi were necessary to accommodate the interpretation given in Hungary. Immediately after the rehearsal they went into a huddle with Festival Ballet's conductor, Geoffrey Corbett, and to his amazement and mine sang to him in perfect unison every note of their soli and pas de deux from beginning to end. Such was the precision and verve of their vocal duet that I remarked that they would soon be in demand for opera as well as ballet!

Gabriella Lakatos's favourite roles are Oriental. She likes to dance Zarema, the Khan's wife, in Asafiev's *The Fountain of Bakchisarai* which is very popular in Budapest. Other favourites of hers are the Polovtsian Girl in *Prince Igor*, Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin*, and an Oriental solo she dances to Ravel's *Bolero*. Perhaps this love of the East influenced her wish to eat at an Indian restaurant in Soho. "One where," she cautioned me, "we can get a real Indian curry." Though some of the dishes seemed to her just like Hungarian food, others were exotic and much approved. She was intrigued by the hot crisp *pappadums*, and bewildered the Hindu waiter by asking for "More bits of cooked paper."

Though Ferenc Havas's favourite role is Franz in *Coppélia*, he was evidently not averse to real Indian curry. Encouraged to speak English by Lakatos, and after a whispered consultation with a Hungarian friend who was interpreting for us, he uttered with great clarity of phrase: "Thank you for the ex-cel-lent In-di-enne din-naire." The honours having been rendered all round, we repaired to a friend's flat for some hours of music, which ended by Lakatos and Havas giving a vigorous demonstration of a new pas de deux in the Oriental manner that they hope to give in Budapest during the coming season.

Havas is, I believe, one of the most outstanding male dancers on the world stage today. Lakatos is that rare miracle, a great ballerina assoluta of quite fantastic versatility. Not only did their *Giselle* and Albrecht turn out to be intelligent and brilliant, but all else that followed. Havas is not only a splendid virtuoso dancer, but an excellent actor. His *tours* must be seen to be believed, and his elevation is wonderful, both in classical and folk dancing.

Lakatos excels in *allegro* rhythms, and her *pirouettes* from every position are remarkable for their speed and perfect finish. She can also give an *adagio* a "singing" line, so that every phrase of her movement glows with the music. Her *Giselle* was charming and touching, immaculate in technique, beautifully and very femininely acted. It seemed almost impossible that the same person could have a high reputation as a character dancer in Hungarian and Oriental style.

While still in her Black Swan costume after a performance at Festival Hall, she announced that Harangozó had created for her in 1951 the role of the Gipsy Girl in *The Kerchief*, the first full-length Hungarian ballet.

"Very interesting for you to see," she said. "Half classical, half Hungarian folk dance, to Kenessey's music." Then, pointing to her ballet shoes so that there should be no mistake, she added, "I make folk dance in these."

This was an understatement. On the Festival Ballet Gala Night, she hurled herself at the stage *sur les pointes*, and executed a swirl of exciting *tours* that left the audience spellbound. Havas, in the role of the Gipsy Boy, swept her up in a breath-taking lift, and they danced together one of the most beautiful *adagios* I have ever seen. Kenessey's haunting music, richly Hungarian and making use of lovely Magyar orchestral timbres, provided evocative and poetic accompaniment, later exploding into a set of boisterous variations in which Havas made a series of spectacular leaps, with legs raised backwards so that his toes nearly touched his head, a movement that belongs to the tradi-

tion of folk dancing and not to mere acrobatics. Lakatos, breaking into a miraculous *enchaînement* of classical *tours*, interspersing *chaîne* with Gipsy whirls, brought this dance to a fantastic conclusion. The huge audience became delirious, clapping and shouting for at least five minutes, until the triumphant Hungarian couple were compelled to repeat the last part of their dance.

These excerpts from Act III make one long to see the whole of *The Kerchief*, and also *The Song of Behari*, another four-act production, with music by the same composer. In this ballet, too, Lakatos and Havas dance the leading roles, and perform, in a ballet within a ballet, the parts of Venus and Paris.

At a party given by Anton Dolin after the Gala, which was sadly for us the Hungarians' last night, I wondered what would happen when Lakatos finds a role that will give scope for her lively sense of humour as well as her other gifts. She had the whole party in roars of laughter when she demanded from us a certificate that would prove to her husband at home that she had spoken English the whole evening. He is the doctor to our British Embassy staff in Budapest, and apparently guards not only their health, but their language from maltreatment. Provided with an hilariously-worded "legal" document signed by us all, Lakatos thrust it into her bosom and said that she would produce it at the Embassy luncheon in Budapest the following Sunday as proof that her English was not bad, and that she need never again resort to speaking German within those august walls!

The next morning they flew home—Havas to be greeted by his mother and father, as he told me in a sudden burst of English. Lakatos lives with her husband and grandmother on the hilly right bank of the Danube, overlooking the magnificent vista beyond the river where, ten-minutes' drive away, are the Opera House and Erkel Theatre where she and Havas dance. I hope that they will sometimes think of London and the joy they gave us, and come again to enliven and delight us next year.

report from Nina Karasyova in Moscow



THE summer season at the Bolshoi Theatre closed with Asafiev's ballet *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*. Part of the ballet company went on vacation and part on tour abroad. A few of the ballet dancers will be engaged in the making of a film version of Prokofiev's ballet *Cinderella*. The Bolshoi Theatre opens its new season in September.

Recently the Kuibyshev Theatre of Opera and Ballet held the opening night of the Indian ballet *Chitra*, the music for which was written by the well-known Indian writer Rabindranath Tagore. This ballet has scored a tremendous success. N. Danilova is responsible for the choreography. Great assistance in the production of this ballet has been rendered by Nandita Kripali, Rabindranath Tagore's grand-daughter, an eminent art scholar, who came to Kuibyshev. The tape record of the music of the ballet *Chitra* was presented to the theatre by K. Menon, India's ambassador to the U.S.S.R.

A premiere of *Queen of the Grass-Snakes* at the Vilnius Theatre of Opera and Ballet was given an enthusiastic reception.

"Vanemuine", Estonia's oldest theatre, will be celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. This theatre produces dramatic plays, operas and ballets.

Some time ago the company of this theatre gave an open-air presentation in the Pevcheskoye Pole (near Tartu) of Lidia Auster's ballet *The Secret*, produced by choreographer Ida Urbel.

The company is now rehearsing a new ballet, called *Ballet Symphony*, by Eino Tamberg, young Estonian composer, choreography by Udo Vyalyaots, which it is planned to present on the river on rafts.

In the Baltic republics there is a folk tradition, now over 100 years old, to hold mass festivals of song and dance. Song and dance contests have been held throughout the republic with the best choral and dance groups chosen to take part in the festivals in Riga, Tallin and Vilnius. These traditional festivals are being held on a particularly grand scale this year.

A chorus of 35,000 persons, brass bands and orchestra of national instruments, as well as thousands of singers and dancers performed during the two-day festival held in Estonia (in the environs of Tallin). E. Kapp's opera "Singer of Freedom" was also presented at the festival, which closed with a spectacular procession through the streets of the city.

At the Festivals in Riga and Vilnius thousands of professional and amateur dancers and singers took part all performing in colourful national costumes.

Although the artists of Moscow theatres were absent during July and August, taking their holidays or touring other cities, the Moscow theatrical season continued, with ballet artists and dance companies of other cities appearing on the stages of its theatres. The Folk Dance Company of the Sverdlovsk Trade Reserves Club held its performances in Sokolniki Park (where,

incidentally, the British Industrial Exhibition will open in 1961). A participant of four world festivals of youth and students (in Budapest, Warsaw, Moscow and Vienna), *The Dance of the Urals Semi-precious Stones* was especially interesting and picturesque, since the costumes and decor for it were done in luminescent colours which gave the impression of real precious Urals stones.

* * *

The Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre

The Moscow tour of the Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre, one of the largest in the Soviet Union (founded May 12, 1945), evoked a lively interest among Moscow theatregoers.

Its ballet company numbers 87 dancers. Of the 21 ballets produced on its stage, 12 are still featured in its present repertoire: Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty*, Pugniglieri's *Esmeralda*, Minkus' *La Bayadere* and *Don Quixote*, Adam's *Giselle*, Chiang Hsiao-hu's *Precious Lotus Lantern*, Prokofiev's *Stone Flower*, Solovoy-Sedoi's *Taras Bulba* (premiere performance in 1960), Saveliev's *Aladdin and his Lamp*, Morozov's *Doctor Aibolit* (Doctor Oh-how-it-hurts!) (awarded a Stalin Prize in 1947), and Laputin's *Masquerade*.

The theatre works in close co-operation with the Soviet composers Spadoveccia, Laputin, Solovoy-Sedoi, Morozov and Savelyev, and intends to stage a ballet on a contemporary theme in the near future. It is now engaged in producing a ballet based on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, the music for which is to be written by A. Spadaveccia. The role of Cleopatra will be performed by People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. Tatyana Zimina. The ballet will be directed by the theatre's choreographer Nina Ulanova, who bears the same name as the famous Soviet ballerina Galina Ulanova.

Many leading choreographers of the Soviet Union, including I. Moiseyev, participate in the theatre's productions. The star performers, People's Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. Tatyana Zimina, L. Krupenina and G. Rykhlov are ably supported by a number of talented young dancers, such as I. Gaft, who appeared on the stage of the Leningrad Maly Opera Theatre before finishing at the Leningrad Ballet School. He is at his best in the part of Chen Siang (*Precious Lotus Lantern*), in which he excels both as a dancer and actor, and in the role of Petro (*Taras Bulba*). Another interesting dancer is V. Sovkov in the part of Lu Yanchiang (*Precious Lotus Lantern*) and Andrei (*Taras Bulba*). Young S. Khodisova makes a fine Katya in the *Stone Flower*, and G. Balashova, G. Polonik and Y. Udintsov take the main character roles in the theatre's ballet productions and dance scenes from the operas.

This was the first time Moscow ballet-lovers saw Chiang Hsiao-hu's *Precious Lotus Lantern*. Produced on the stage of the Novosibirsk Theatre jointly with Chinese choreographers, it is the story of the poet Lu Yan-chen who fell in love with the statue of the holy maiden San Shen-mu.

The poet composed verses and songs in honour of her unusual beauty. The statue finally came to life. Taking along the precious lotus lantern which brought happiness and warded off misfortunes, the lovers left the temple. The infuriated priest Erlan-shen swore he would punish San Shen-mu who had dared to violate the laws of heaven. Protected by the precious lotus lantern, the lovers were happy. A son was born to them. But Erlan-shen and his dog, which penetrated into the house of San Shen-mu in the guise of a magician, stole the precious lotus lantern. Erlan-shen made Lu Yan-chen blind and imprisoned San Shen-mu in a cave whose entrance was guarded by the precious lotus lantern. A holy man came to the rescue of San Shen-mu's little boy Chen Siang. Fifteen years elapse. The brave and noble youth Chen Siang now dreams of his mother. He tries to approach her, but Erlan-shen bars the way to him. Telling his dream to the holy man, the youth borrows the latter's bow and precious arrows and, receiving the man's blessings, sets out for the cave. On the way he enters the temple where the statue of the holy maiden San Shen-mu had once stood and finds his blind father there, bitterly deploring his fate. The youth restores his father's sight, and as the father recognises his son, he gives him his blessings. The youth encounters at the entrance to the cave a huge dragon, and kills it. A group of soldiers emerge from its body. They arm Chen Siang with a precious pole-axe. A battle takes place between the troops of Erlan-shen and Chen Siang, from which Chen Siang issues the victor. Chopping up the hill with his precious pole-axe, he sets San Shen-mu free.

Soviet Ballet Dancers Abroad

The Georgian Folk Dance Company directed by N. Ramishvili and I. Sukhishvili has returned home from its tour of the U.S.A., Canada and Latin America, during which it gave 100 concerts to as many as 500,000 spectators.

The Red Banner Soviet Army Company directed by People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. B. Alexandrov met with triumphant success during its tour of France. Its concerts in Paris were attended by 189,000 spectators. Appearing as well in Czechoslovakia and Austria, it gave a total of 88 concerts.

The choreographic part of its programme, directed by the well-known Soviet ballet master and art director of the Ukrainian Folk Dance Company, P. Virsky, included three army dances and the Ukrainian dance "Vikhr."

* * *

The ballet company of the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Music Theatre, consisting of 108 dancers, toured in Hungary this year for the second time to perform at the traditional theatrical festival in Segeda. The Soviet artists presented N. Peiko's *Joan of Arc*, Adam's *Corsaire* and the one-act Tchaikovsky ballet, *Francesca da Rimini* as staged by the theatre's young choreo-

H. M. Ambassador in Toyko has appointed Cyril Eland as British representative of an International Dance Institute to be opened in that city.

Ballet in Japan

reported by Cyril Eland

THE Leningrad Ballet paid a five weeks' visit to Japan playing in Tokyo at the Takarazuka Theatre from 4th June to 29th June and in Osaka at the Festival Hall from 2nd July to 9th July. The visit was sponsored by the newspaper company Yomiuri Shimbun and the Art Friend Association and was supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The company consisted of about some 120 artists and included among its principals the prima ballerina Nataliya Dudinskaya, the soloists Inna Zubkovskaya, Ilina Kolpakova and Alla Osipenko, the premier danseur Konstantin Sergeyev and male soloists Igor Belsky, Alexei Gribov, and Vladilen Semyonov. Their repertoire was made up of four different programmes, *Swan Lake*, *The Stone Flower*, *Les Sylphides* and *Giselle*, and Act One of *Bayadélka* together with a group of divertissements. They brought with them their own decors for the three principal ballets, and their own stage technicians and two conductors, Yevgeni Dubovskoi and Yuri Gamalei, but no other musicians. Somewhat unwisely they decided not to bring a few of their own instrumentalists to act as principals and so strengthen the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra who provided the accompaniment.

My peregrinations in various parts of the world since 1945 have only once previously brought me into contact with the Soviet Ballet. In the summer of 1949 I saw what must have been one of the first Russian touring companies, a small mixed group of soloists and dancers including Olga Lépushinskaya, at Teatr Polski in Warsaw. My impressions both on that and on the present occasion have been very similar. I have been acutely conscious of the fact that the dancers have experienced great difficulty in adapting themselves to undertake performances in strange and not altogether adequate surroundings. In Tokyo as in Warsaw the stage has been of insufficiently large proportions to permit complete freedom of movement.

There has been an undertone of disappointment in the reaction of the Japanese and American cognoscenti: audiences have applauded warmly, but not with entirely whole-hearted enthusiasm. This is of course the first time that the Japanese have had the opportunity of seeing any of the great classical ballets performed in a traditional manner, and they have tended to make unfavourable comparison with the more immediately eye-catching glamour of the Bolshoi Ballet in programmes of selected excerpts and with the contemporary idiom of the leading American companies.

I cannot deny that I myself have experienced a degree of boredom during the four performances which I have seen. There has in my opinion been a lack of élan and spirit in much of the dancing and the orchestra unfortunately has played quite atrociously. Prokofiev must have turned in his grave if the strains of many passages of *The Stone Flower* penetrated to his last resting place. The sounds which emerged

from the orchestral pit had a profoundly disturbing effect on the performers on stage. The principals frequently were to be seen performing the steps of their solos with complete disregard for the orchestral accompaniment and the corps de ballet, no doubt demoralised by the cacophony and the lack of tautness in rhythm, displayed quite alarming hesitancy and uncoordination in their movements. To add to the discomfort of the dancers there was insufficient space to manoeuvre. The stage at the Takarazuka Theatre is wide but not of sufficient depth, and, for reasons which I feel sure are explainable, the wings were foreshortened with black curtains and the full depth of the stage even when used was curtailed to about a third of its width in order to box in the decor, which appears to have been designed for stages of much narrower dimensions. The corps de ballet, frequently of 32 or more individuals, was like a group of birds confined within too small a cage, hesitant in their movements of flight for fear of beating their wings against the confining bars: one could feel the anxiety of the performers as to how to circumnavigate the claustrophobic proximity of the wings and how to squeeze their bodies tight against the back cloth when ranged in the rear row of dancers. Entrances and exits of both soloists and groups were executed gingerly and with caution.

Les Sylphides was presented against dark draperies. The dreamy mood of the ballet was shattered by a raucous rendering of an orchestral arrangement of Chopin's Polonaise Opus 40 No. 1 played before the rise of the curtain. Kolpakova as principal soloist danced with great ease and authority and her precise and clean movements were in direct contrast to the inaccurate timing of the corps de ballet who wobbled badly sur les pointes; the arm movements of the latter in all performances were noticeably superior to their foot work.

Dudinskaya and Sergeyev danced the leading roles in *Giselle* supported by Korneyeva as Queen of the Wilis, Kabarova as Bathilda, Utretskaya as Bertha, Nisnevitch as Wilfred and Mustayev as Hans. Technically Dudinskaya is a magnificent dancer: she has, however, a tendency to flutter and fuss in her movements. She is not a great actress and her efforts to simulate the innocence of youth were merely coy. Sergeyev's movements throughout appeared ponderous and somewhat forced. The most brilliant dancing of the evening was provided by two young unnamed dancers in the villagers' divertissement in the first act. The corps de ballet acquitted themselves better in the first act than in the second in which the stage was cluttered with sproutings of near tropical undergrowth.

The atmosphere of the production of *Giselle* was very much of the nineteenth century. The first act decor apart from the back cloth was an almost exact reproduction of the original Paris Opera set. The long passages of mime were enacted, almost overacted, with deliberate and completely

unsubtle gesture giving the appearance of routine rather than spontaneous performance. This interpretation, very much in the spirit of melodrama, was never moving or exciting because the dancers did not project themselves to audience as real people but merely as stock characters. The vintage scene was presented complete with the entry of the decorated wagon and Bacchus sitting astride a wine cask. As far as I could observe Giselle did not stab herself to death with Albrecht's sword but expired in consequence of her fit of madness.

Swan Lake appeared to be the most carefully prepared of the ballets presented. The decors if old fashioned were unpretentious and inoffensive and were clearly simplified versions of more grandiose sets: the costumes too were unimaginative. Osipenko acquitted herself with flawless brilliance as Odile but did not bring quite the required contrasting warmth to the part of Odette: she is a beautiful dancer faultless in her movements and poses, and utterly at ease in executing the most difficult steps. She was ably supported by Vladilen Semyonov as the Prince who like most of the Leningrad male soloists is an artist of athletic qualities rather than a danseur noble: despite his astonishing elevation and tremendous agility he lacks the polish and elegance which are the mark of a great dancer. Dudinskaya performs with astounding technical brilliance but watching her I was acutely conscious of a lack of spontaneity in her movements: I felt that her dancing was too forceful, too exaggerated and too strong. Osipenko's movements do not have the same quality of artificiality, they are natural and easy though not so sensational or so remarkable mechanically, but they are entirely human and therefore more satisfying emotionally.

The Leningrad Company introduce the character of a jester into the two court scenes, a part which was played with great virtuosity by Pavlosky. In the first act the court dancers were sadly curtailed and the corps de ballet was almost as static on the fringe of stage as a pantomime chorus. The end of the act merges musically and dramatically into the beginning of the second act: the Prince left alone on the stage sees a flight of swans overhead and rushes off into the forest in pursuit of them. The second act is slightly modified in so far as the Prince is not accompanied by a friend and hence the great pas de trois becomes a pas de deux with resulting disastrous limitation of choreography. The best group dancing of this act was displayed in the pas de quatre of the cygnets. The court ball in Act 3 gave the impression of being a somewhat sparsely attended function with insufficient attendants in too bare and gloomy a Gothic setting. It did, however, provide the most exhilarating dancing of the evening. The Neapolitan dance was outstanding, but very strangely the execution of the Mazurka was far below that of the other national dances. Osipenko and Semyonov gave a most brilliant account of the grand pas de deux. The final act was

BALLET IN JAPAN *Continued*

different in many respects from the version given by the Royal Ballet, but in particular in its ending. The Prince having defeated Rothbart is reunited happily to Odette and in the words of the programme note "surrounded by her friends, Odette and Siegfried hail with joy the first rays of the rising sun". Sugary pink tints spotlighted this sentimental and inappropriate conclusion and the orchestra seemed on the point of concluding in a major key.

The Stone Flower presents a sorry picture of contemporary Soviet ballet: the story of the unhappy vicissitudes of Prokofiev's music are well known and the composer cannot be entirely blamed for a score of which he personally disapproved. There is nothing whatsoever modern in the choreography of the work and Diaghilev even in 1920 would not have lifted an eyebrow in surprise. The ballet appears to contain three contrasting types of dance, the pseudo classical posturings of the hero Danila and heroine Katerina, the fantastic contortions of the Mistress of the Copper Mountain and her court, and the folk dances of the peasants. The latter alone appeared to me to have any element of originality though in contrast to the great crowd scenes of *Petrushka* the choreography in the fair scene of Act 3 was primitive. The solos and pas de deux of the lovers were meaningless but though trite were not vulgar. The appearance of the Mistress of the Copper Mountain and her court were banal to the point of being ridiculous. An inhabitant of Tokyo entering the auditorium at these moments might well have suspected that here was the Takarazuka Girls' Opera presenting yet another of their spectacular tinselly reviews. The decor and costumes used for this ballet were ugly and hideous in their blatant colour contrasts.

The most satisfying performance of the evening was a gypsy dance in Act 3 by Ilna Gensler. Kolpakova as Katerina and Osipenko as the Mistress of the Copper Mountain both played their uninteresting roles with brilliance. Anatol Gridin as Severyan the bailiff gave a remarkable exhibition of character dancing with astonishing contortions of his body. Alexei

Gribov as Danila was given little opportunity by the score to show his ability.

The fourth programme of the Leningrad Ballet was made up of *Bayadélka*, a shortened version of Petipa's *La Bayadère*, followed by short solo and group dances. There was no programme note to explain the circumstances of what was designated as *Bayadélka* Act 1 and the costumes of the dancers gave no hint of India. Osipenko was the principal soloist and her partner was Gennadi Selyutsky. While the corps de ballet went through a series of elaborate geometrical patterns, Osipenko performed a dazzling series of variations with impeccable finish: this was dancing at its most rococo. Osipenko spun around the stage like a top executing classical figures of great beauty with effortless ease.

The series of short divertissements which followed were designed to display the varied talents of the troupe. The corps de ballet went through their paces in a dull presentation of Tchaikovsky's *Valse des Fleurs*, Gribov and Menchonok performed a sensual pas de deux called *Huntsman and Bird* to music of Grieg. There were two comic dances, *Troika* and *Dolls*, reminiscent of the programmes of the Moiseyev Dancers. Dudinskaya appeared in the *Dying Swan*. The best entertainment was provided by the vigorous dancing of the male members of the company in an extract from *Taras Bulba* which consisted of spectacular acrobatics.

I would hesitate to pass judgment on the Leningrad Ballet in consequence of seeing them in four performances only while on tour in a foreign country. Their ballerinas at their best are magnificent; unfortunately I am unable to mention the nineteen-year-old Inna Zubkovskaya who did not take part in any of the performances which I attended. Their male dancers excel in character roles and in sheer athletics. I did not, however, feel that any of these dancers projected their personality to the audience in the same way as do artists such as Fonteyn and Massine: though many of them were highly accomplished in the technique of their art they were lacking in that quality which is the mark of only the supreme artist. The corps de ballet, even allowing for their difficulties on too small a stage, should have made a better showing: their only

obvious superiority to dancers from the West was in their sensitive and flexible arm movements in the classical ballets.

On 7th May the Komaki Ballet gave two public performances at the Hibiya Hall, Tokyo, of a programme consisting of *Les Sylphides*, Grand Pas de Deux from *Don Quixote* and *Petrushka*. According to the programme, *Petrushka* was choreographed by Masahide Komaki after Michael Fokine. Not very much of Fokine remained and what Komaki substituted was certainly no improvement on one of the world's finest ballet scores. Local circumstances seem to compel Japanese ballet companies to give a small number of performances inadequately rehearsed both by the ensemble and in conjunction with the orchestra. The results are disastrous but no one seems to mind very much.

Rumour has it that running a ballet school in Japan is a most profitable activity and it seems that all that the majority of teachers are interested in is money. Clearly what Japan needs is some kind of Camargo Society which will rescue the best dancers from the clutches of the money-grabbing teachers. Ballet can never flourish when audiences are largely composed of fond parents dreaming of their sons and daughters as future ballet stars without themselves knowing what ballet is: they not only pay for their seats but they also pay for little Noriko or Masao to play her small part in the spectacle.

The Komaki Ballet is not the object of the foregoing strictures but it cannot prosper in an atmosphere which demands immediate results and is totally uncritical. The Komaki Company contains good dancers such as Naoto Seki who played *Petrushka* and Emiko Suzuki who took the part of the street dancer. Kazuyo Ishigaki and Yasuko Sasa gave an excellent performance of the *Don Quixote* Pas de Deux to which they had clearly devoted an immense amount of rehearsal. Individual good dancers do not constitute a ballet company and here lies the problem in Japan. Over-ambitious and under-rehearsed performances such as those I saw at the Hibiya Hall on 7th May will never forward the progress of ballet as an art in Japan and are both saddening and ludicrous to experience.

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grapher and ballet dancer A. Chichinadze. The programme of the concert included scenes from the ballets *Swan Lake*, *Esmeralda*, *Lola* (by Vasilenko) and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (by Oransky).

Among the company's leading performers were V. Bovt, E. Vlasova, S. Vinogradova, M. Redina, M. Liepa, Y. Kuznetsova and head choreographer Igor Smirnov.

In the spring of 1961 the State Folk Dance Company of the U.S.S.R. directed by I. Moiseyev will tour the U.S.A. and Canada with a new programme.

* * *

The Latvian Opera and Ballet Theatre of Riga presented its new première of A. Khachatryan's *Spartacus*, as staged by Y. Chang.

* * *

The Tbilisi Gruzfilm Studio has made a colour ballet-film of *Othello*, produced by People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. V. Chabukiani. The music for the ballet was written by A. Machavariani, the well-known Georgian composer. The film is not merely a reproduction of the stage version of the ballet (as produced at the Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre) but an independent work specially

made for the screen. The cast includes the Paliashvili Theatre's star performers V. Chabukiani (*Othello*), V. Tsignadze (*Desdemona*), Z. Kikaleishvili (*Iago*), L. Mitashvili (*Emilia*), B. Monavardisavshvili (*Cassio*), E. Chabukiani (*Bianca*), R. Tsulunidze (*Roderigo*). The decor was designed by S. Virsaladze and S. Vasadze. Shot by cameraman F. Vysotsky and conducted by O. Dimitriadis, the film will soon be released on the screens of the Soviet Union.

First Woman-Conductor of Ballets

Olga Berg, who has now been conducting the Leningrad Maly Opera Theatre for more than a decade, is a pianist and ballerina as well as a conductor. She took music lessons in her childhood, but after seeing Glazunov's ballet *Raymonda*, dreamed of being a dancer herself. Though she entered the Leningrad Ballet School, she did not drop her music studies. On finishing at ballet school, she joined the ballet company of the Leningrad Opera and Ballet Theatre, and made her first important debut in a dance suite, built up on classical and grotesque dances, from

I. Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* (choreography] by V. Lopukhov).

At the same time, she studied at the conservatory and finished piano class under Professor O. Kalantarova. A chance occurrence changed the course of Olga's career. While dancing a waltz at a concert, she was dropped by her partner who slipped while supporting her. The result was a disjointed thumb on her left hand. She could have gone on dancing but Olga could not live without her music. She played with her right hand, exercising it every day in preparation for the First Countrywide Musicians Contest. Soon she was able to play with both hands, but her thumb continued to ache. Nevertheless, she managed to pass two stages of the contest. None of the members of the jury suspected the excruciating pain she was experiencing while playing. She was unable to go on with the third stage, her thumb refused to move. Olga then entered the conductor's department of the conservatory. The war intervened, but in 1945 she finished her class with flying colours, and made her new debut as conductor at a graduation ballet performance at the Leningrad Ballet School.

Trudy Goth reporting from Spoleto

EVER since the first year of Menotti's "Festival of the Two Worlds"—Europe has had an eye-opener on the possibilities of young, mostly unknown American dance-talent.

Again this year a new company was presented, for the first time anywhere, in Spoleto. But generally speaking "New American Ballets" showed a somewhat less gratifying result than the presentations of the past two years. This in spite of the fact that there was some remarkable achievements from individuals and that the success with public and critics was a satisfying one.

"New American Ballets" justifies its title only inasmuch as they are truly "American" in style, subject matter, presentation and personnel. But they are neither "new" much less are they "ballets." The company is recruited by brilliant individual dancers who by rehearsing together for some weeks cannot pretend to be judged anywhere near a "company." Star soloists, although not billed as such, were Mary Hinkson and Arthur Mitchell, negro dancers (the "company" was a mixed one of two-thirds coloured, one-third white). Mitchell is brilliant but shows bad habits of overselling and over-impressing the audience. The greatest personal success went unchallenged to lovely chinese-born Akkiko Kanda, seen in two widely different roles (technically as well as stylistically speaking) such as the naughty child in *Games* and as the girl in *Meridian* choreographed by Donald MacKayle and Paul Taylor respectively. Not only were her dancing and looks thoroughly and perfectly gratifying but her projection in each case strong and convincing and doing full justice to the choreographer's intentions.

All in all in this company the negro element, specially among the male dancers, was the stronger one and as well the choice of subjects stemming from negro folklore, spirituals, folksongs (such as *Games* and *Rainbow Round my Shoulder*) and popular music had more impact, artistry and universal appeal than for instance "Meridian" by Paul Taylor which was difficult to accept for an Italian public, made even more so by

Morton Feldman's un-gratifying score. No one could find fault with the actual dancing and everyone even admired the acrobatic prowess of the dancers—but the non-initiated public still prefers to see something which is more akin to dancing, less incomprehensible psychology and more tuneful accompaniment.

The small, but excellently trained and conducted chorus (by Howard A. Roberts) which accompanied *Rainbow* (together with a guitar) was the highlight of the evening's musical contribution and the folksongs which are the only musical accompaniment (expertly and humorously sung by Mary Kinson and choreographer MacKayle) were most successful and well received. *Games* is certainly not new to U.S.A. audiences, but it has preserved its freshness and spontaneity ever since it was shown for the first time on a Stage-Managers-Club "Talent Show" several years ago.

The opening number *Entrance* was a conventional but well choreographed piece, such as is missing in many programmes of the kind (by Karel Shook). Closing the programme was a work by Herbert Ross, unusually dancy and crafty for this choreographer whose usual style is heavier and more intricate, and served its purpose excellently. Chavez' "Toccata for Percussion" has an excellent score to be choreographed. Costumes and decor were so to speak non-existent.

"Album Leaves 1960" followed in general last year's pattern, but had no sketches only dances and folksongs as well as pantomime (Juki Arkin from Israel) which made for a more unified and smoother programming than in 1959. Of the dances in general it can be said that they were more than sketchy and casual and in some instances less understandable than desirable. Notable exception *Three Epitaphs* by Paul Taylor a work to be singled out for its actuality (Men in the Moon, satellites, sputnik etc.) and good sense of humour. Taylor's *Rebus* couldn't have been truer to the title—the whole, if not too numerous audience didn't absolutely know what it was all about or driving at,

In this programme it was not quite clear whether the dances were inspired by the many, third-rate abstract paintings shown during the Festival in the mushrooming "art galleries" located in those holes in the walls which in non-festival times are occupied by donkeys, goats or pushcarts—or vice versa.

Mr. Arkin's pantomime numbers might have been interesting, would they not have mercilessly reminded the spectator of a combination Barrault-Marceau. There seems only to be one kind and type of pantomime and solely the degree of expertness, taste, sensitivity and good taste varies. Mr. Arkin, although expert and professional lacked almost everything which makes his forebears what they are, and especially his third number *Sick Humour* had as its only distinction that it made one feel positively sick.

The only other dance attraction on the Festival programme was a Ballet Theatre engagement which made many a ghost come to life, and was enjoyed mostly by those who were not aware of the ghosts. As a whole the faithful and enthusiastic ballet public of Spoleto has been fed on contemporary Robbins work (such as the latest, *Opus Jazz*, *N.Y. Export* and *The Concert*) on personalities like Nora Kaye or Carmen de Lavallade, whereas this time Ballet Theatre was only a pale reflection of all that and for instance *Fancy Free* had the sole value (as one of the most expert critics called it) of an archive piece, showing an "early Robbins."

All this took place between June 8th and July 10th, by the 11th—like magic—the little Umbrian town had become silent again, no hammering piano out of geranium-decorated windows, no dancers lounging on the cathedral square's staircase, no little boys on bicycles with a dozen violently coloured tights around their necks—dashing from stage to workshop and back. It all vanished with a better stage trick than the ones rehearsed weeks before. It most probably will reappear again in just the same fashion exactly 11 months after.

Jack Anderson reporting from San Francisco

TWO companies—one, imported; the other, local—enlivened the usual mid-summer lull with fine dancing.

The imported company was the Royal Danish Ballet which opened its American tour in San Francisco on August 12 with Frederick Ashton's *Romeo and Juliet*. It was a good choice, for this impressive ballet reveals the Danes' talents as both dancers and actors. There are many memorable moments: Juliet's leap into the Nurse's arms, the meeting of the lovers, the balcony and parting scenes, the potion scene, the drugged Juliet serenaded by troubadours, all the sword-play.

If the ballet has a weakness, it is that it lacks overall dramatic continuity and momentum and tends to break down into a series of isolated, though brilliant, scenes. This might have been avoided if Ashton and designer Peter Rice had employed some variation of the Elizabethan stage which allowed for fluid action without pause for scene changes. Title roles alternated between Mona Vangsaa and Kirsten Petersen, and Henning Kronstam and Flemming Flindt.

Konservatoriet was a charming introduction to August Bournonville, for it is a little grammar of the style which he inherited and developed. The third act of *Napoli* proved to be one of the most infectious divertissements in ballet.

But Bournonville's *La Sylphide* most

naturally aroused greatest interest. At first glance, it seems a hopelessly quaint collection of Romantic clichés—elfin creatures, a yearning hero, a deceived bride, cackling witches, etc. Yet a closer look reveals it to be extremely well choreographed. Dance patterns are inventive, characterisation, though simple, is sure, the plot develops logically, and the division of the cast into sylphs, Scotsmen, and witches provides fine opportunity for choreographic variety and contrast. Margrethe Schanne seemed the reincarnation of the Sylphide herself. At another performance, Kirsten Simone gave an interesting interpretation, less ethereal and more girlish, but which suggested that this Sylphide really longed to be human.

The Whims of Cupid, despite its great age, remains very funny. But surely the present production contains more pointe work than was known (or possible) in the eighteenth century.

The single criticism which can be made about programming is that, in a five performance engagement, the only contemporary work was *Romeo and Juliet*. This might leave the impression that the Danes have solely antiquarian interests whereas, of course, such is not the case.

The local offering was Ballet 1960, composed of San Francisco Ballet soloists who wished to perform during their summer vacation. Except for Lew Christensen's

familiar *Divertissement d'Auber*, the ballets were new works by Michael Smuin and Jeanne de Herst.

Most interesting was Miss Herst's *By the Side of the Freeway*, a satire on aspects of suburban life set to an arrangement of music and sound effects by Jack Sweeney and John Tomaschke. Gentle in its humor at the start, its bite became increasingly sharp, culminating in a murderously exact portrayal of a cocktail party which, in its deliberate lunacy, resembled Ionesco's plays. Neither ballet, in the conventional sense, nor musical comedy, *By the Side of the Freeway* was a fresh piece of theatre dance and social comment.

Michael Smuin attempted a fusion of jazz and ballet in formal terms in *Symphony in Jazz* (Liebermann) and informally in *Session*, a strenuous piece accompanied only by percussion and the finger snappings and vocal noises of the dancers themselves. Even in *Accent*, a Vivaldi abstraction, his very American temperament was displayed, for the ballet had a brashness associated with no other country.

It is to be hoped that these ballets, plus others by their choreographers, may be seen again. For Ballet 1960, in both choreographic and performance standards, is equal to virtually all the "chamber ballet" ensembles now touring the United States.

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NEW RECORDS

MEPHISTO

With other works of Liszt, it was the first movement of the *Faust Symphony* that attracted Adolph Bolm when he was creating his ballet, *Mephisto*, for the San Francisco Ballet. It is surely Liszt's orchestral masterpiece, each movement being a character study of Faust, Gretchen and Mephistopheles and the whole work is rounded off with a coda for tenor and chorus. Sir Thomas Beecham and the R.P.O. on Columbia 33CX1737-8, give a superlative performance, which, together with the fine recording, should meet the challenge of all newcomers for years to come. It is Sir Thomas' elegance and subtle cutting wit, and his inborn gallant romanticism towards Gretchen, that held me consistently through this long score. Alexander Young gives a lyrical rendering of the tenor solo and is in good voice. The fill-up, *Orpheus*, which Tatjana Gsovsky choreographed, is the most attractive of Liszt's symphonic poems.

CONCERTO BAROCCO

Balanchine's well-known ballet, *Concerto Barocco*, to Bach's *Concerto in D minor* for two violins, needs no preamble. However, the latest H.M.V. recording, ALP1760, will delight both ballet goers and followers of this great composer, and with it is his Violin Concertos in A minor and E major. This disc was recorded shortly after I had heard Yehudi Menuhin play and conduct the *Brandenburg Concertos*—see *BALLET TODAY* of March this year—in Wells Cathedral, which to me was a great and moving experience. He has made a deep study of Bach's music since the days of his youth, and here we have the fruits of his labours. He seems to get into its very heart with a spontaneity that belies all the thought behind it. The approach to Bach of Charles Ferras, the second violinist, dovetails so beautifully that I have no hesitation in recommending this recording. There are tiny criticisms here and there to be made in all three concertos, of course, but it is pointless to seek perfection in this world.

TCHAIKOVSKY BALLETS

Of course, it depends on which ballets you are wanting but of the four discs in front of me, the Philharmonia with Kurtz conducting excerpts from the *Sleeping Beauty*, H.M.V. ALP1790, takes pride of place. It is the twin of Kurtz' *Swan Lake*, ALP1644—see *BALLET TODAY*, December 1958—and again we have Menuhin playing the violin solos in the first and last acts with such feeling that I shall be sorry for any ballet record collector who does not possess it. The second H.M.V. disc is in the Concert Classics series, XLP20024, of

Continued on page 30 foot of col. 1

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Giselle and I. By Alicia Markova. Barrie & Rockliff. 25s.

THOUGH these two books both represent the memoirs of famous ballerinas, they differ fantastically from each other. In the former dancing is given such little prominence that at times one almost forgets the author is a dancer; in the latter, dancing is the subject of every sentence on every page, so that one almost begins to doubt whether the author has had any private life.

Mathilde Kschessinska in her prime was a very great dancer: the first great Russian dancer of modern times, she went to the top in the Maryinsky at a time when Italian ballerinas were dominant, and played a crucial role in the development of the Russian school. Her talent was so remarkable that she reached a unique position (being in fact the only prima ballerina assoluta) at a time of quite unparalleled flowering in the art of dancing—the time that saw the emergence of Preobazhenska, Pavlova, Karsavina, Trefilova, and many others. Quite apart from being the prima ballerina assoluta, Kschessinska had a position of fantastic authority in the Maryinsky because of the nature of her relationship with the Tsar and a number of Grand Dukes of the Imperial family. Russia remained an autocracy long after other countries had gone over to democracy, and the ballet was very much a court institution, even though performances were given in public as well as at the palace theatre. Kschessinska, for her part, was quite as much an absolute monarch in her sphere as the Tsar in his. Since she lived through a fascinating and crucial period in the history of ballet, and was in a position to know everything that was going on, she could—if she wished—have told a very great deal about what happened. She could, for example, have told us in detail what it was like to be rehearsed by Petipa; how the Russian school gradually took shape; how she built up her greatest role—the very dramatic role of Esmeralda; and a dozen other things of comparable importance. In fact, however, she devotes only a very few pages to dancing in the whole long book, and what she says is usually too general to be of much interest. What she does tell us about, in suffocating detail, is her parties, her jewels, her houses, her servants, her journeys, and her Grand Dukes.

Fortunately there are a few fascinating pages about dancing, and these are enough to make the book worth reading—though they annoy the reader by showing him what he is missing elsewhere. One such page contains her account of the famous “panier” incident which had a major influence on the development of ballet in this century. By something of a miracle, the Imperial Theatres had for once been put under the direction of a man of taste, culture and imagination (Prince Volkonsky), and he was doing all in his power to advance the art of ballet. He had designed a period costume (with hoops) for the ballerina Legnani, interpreting the title role in the ballet *La Camargo*. Taking over this role, Kschessinska decided that she would dance it without the hoops, believing that these would interfere with her execution of the dance; in any case their absence would not be noticed under the billowing skirts. Volkonsky sent a message that she must wear them. As she puts it with characteristic pride and egotism, “the outcome was that I categorically refused to put on the hoops and danced without them”. Volkonsky then imposed a fine on her; to Kschessinska, this was an insult: “I could not submit to such an insult without taking steps to put it right. I had no other resource but to apply once more to the Tsar, begging him to have the fine remitted through the same channel.” Volkonsky was forced to cancel the fine in the same way that he imposed it—by a notice on the notice-board—and he then resigned. He was succeeded by an army officer, and so—for good or ill—the course of ballet history was changed. This much is a commonplace of ballet history: what Kschessinska does is to make clear just what she thought of the proceedings, and clarifies things a good deal; for example, she explains that there was no personal contact between her and Volkonsky, and some intriguers took advantage of this to foment discord. The fact is that Kschessinska's ideas about the hoops were quite sensible, and if she had talked direct to Volkonsky all would have been well.

Unfortunately Kschessinska leaves obscure another important event—her decision to “retire” at an early age and become a guest artist. She says she was driven to this decision by intriguers: but who could hope to intrigue successfully against an artist so powerful that she could force the retirement of even the Director of the Imperial Theatres?

By far the best chapters in the book are the three in which she describes her experiences at the time of the Revolution. Her memory is quite remarkable, and she builds up a clear picture of those harrowing times.

Her charm was so remarkable that a good many men found her

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irresistible, and she delighted in exercising her powers of fascination. At the very end of the book she reproduces a delightful account of a meeting between her and a Lieutenant of Dragoons, with whom she flirted at a masked ball in 1900. This account (written by the Lieutenant) gives a much more vivid picture of her life at the time than anything in her own account of the period.

Kschessinska's penchant for flirtation is part of a pattern; it may perhaps be best understood as a projection of the same underlying attitude which led her to arrange with the Tsar to prevent any other dancer performing one of "her" roles, and caused her to concentrate in her book on her social life rather than on her dancing. What seems to have mattered most to her was the exercise of power—and it was not important to her whether she did this through her dancing or through her personal fascination.

MARKOVA'S book does not contain all that one might hope for, but it has an interesting theme, and will be treasured by her many admirers. She has chosen to write her memoirs in terms of her experiences in one role, that of *Giselle*. This gives the book an unusual flavour, and up to a point it works very well—for *Giselle* is her favourite role, and most of the crucial events of her artistic career have been associated in some way with *Giselle*. On the other hand it stops her from writing about her training under Astafieva (to whom the book is dedicated) and her work in the Diaghilev company—experiences which must have played an important role in determining her future development—and it encourages her to avoid saying anything about such a crucial event in her life as her departure from the Festival Ballet. On the other hand the fact that she is writing her memoirs (rather than a book on *Giselle*) causes her to hold back from writing a detailed interpretation of the whole development of the role of *Giselle*—something she is quite capable of doing, as she proves on pp. 185–6 by writing in detail of one episode—and she considers that the performance of *Giselle* by the Bolshoi "does not come within the scope of this tale": if only some editor had persuaded her to cut out some of the innumerable quotations from reviews in favour of a detailed comparison by her of the interpretations of *Giselle* by Spessivsteva and Ulanova!

One of the most interesting aspects of this book is that it makes clear just what happened during the years in America during and immediately after the War: the Markova who appeared in London in 1948 was very different from the Markova last seen in 1938, showing a much stronger technique and more dramatic ability: her mad scene, for example, was strikingly more effective. Markova in fact makes clear that on the one hand she worked very hard on her technique with the Cecchetti-trained teacher Vincenzo Celli, and on the other hand she kept thinking about the role and trying out new ways of building it up.

Another interesting aspect of *Giselle and I* is the picture it gives of the life of an "international" ballerina, criss-crossing the airways of the world to dance with companies of many different types in a great many countries. Her life now is in many respects similar to that of the stars of the Romantic Ballet, some 120 years ago—but rather more strenuous, because of the speed of air travel. A dancer must be very tough to stand the strain of such a life: as she rightly emphasizes in several places, the appearance of fragility which a ballerina gives on stage is very much an illusion.

Though Markova's book is very different from Kschessinska's, and reflects a very different temperament, the two dancers are not dissimilar in all respects. When plans were being made for the Coronation Season of the Markova-Dolin Ballet in 1937, Markova felt very strongly (and quite rightly) that the season should include *Giselle*; but it was only by threatening to throw herself from a balcony that she was able to win the agreement of her fellow directors to the presentation of *Giselle*. This showed considerable force of character.

FERNAU HALL

NEW RECORDS *Continued from page 28*

random extracts from *Swan Lake* and the usual suite from *The Nutcracker*, played by the R.P.O. under George Weldon. The recording is good and clear and, financially, it is good value for the money, remembering that Weldon is by no means in the top flight of conductors. Some of the passages lack the buoyancy that one has the right to expect.

Ansermet's selection from *Swan Lake*, Decca LXT5581, is excellent for those buying their first record of this ballet. It consists of most of the best known items that one wishes to recall. However, on comparing the performance with that of Kurtz' it is lacking. It has not the atmosphere of greasepaint and canvas, the proscenium arch and the dimly-lit auditorium. Has he been away from the theatre too long? Finally, Markevitch. His is an individual rendering of the *Nutcracker Suite*, Columbia 33CX1691, about which there will be varying opinions. Even so, there is no doubt that he has considered each item carefully and I leave you to make up your own mind as to whether it is what you want. The coupling, the *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture*, has been so often choreographed that one might almost consider it as "ballet" music. Markevitch's interpretation is certainly moving.

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